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The Paradox of Existence

Philosophy and Aesthetics in the Young Schelling

Leonardo V. Distaso

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THE PARADOX OF EXISTENCE

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THE PARADOX OF EXISTENCE

Philosophy and Aesthetics in the Young Schelling

by

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To Ludovico:
May He Find His Absolute

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Foreword

This book is not a merely historical reconstruction of Schelling's thought; its main goal is to provide a contribution for a better comprehension of the importance of the philosophical quest of the young German philosopher from within, which represents a turning point for the whole thought of modernity. I did not describe the various fields of Schelling's work, but I pointed out the central position of his Aesthetics, through the analysis of the inner mechanisms of his concepts. This mechanism, in my opinion, shows the reason why an Aesthetic philosophy is possible, and why its origin can be traced to Kant's Aesthetics (particularly in Kant's *Critique of Judgement)* and in the speculations of the early post-Kantian philosophy. The young Schelling's philosophical problems precede his encounter with Fichte's philosophy. Schelling discovers these problems, related to Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Wolff, Leibniz and Kant, in the protestant college of the Stift in Tübingen. Fichte confirmed the necessity of an urgent reform of transcendental philosophy, and offered to the young philosopher a philosophical dictionary and an orientation. Schelling exploited these resources with a great degree of autonomy, independence and originality. In these years Hölderlin's influence on Schelling was much greater. Schelling's and Hölderlin's speculations, in these crucial years, were tightly connected.

The mechanism that animates Schelling's thought in these crucial years can be summarized as follows: Schelling wonders how it is possible to think the unconditional One from the point of view of its alterity, and after the One has lost its oneness and lies scattered in the fragments of its original fracture. Thus the problem is to understand how the One appears to itself and to the philosopher as the Two (a Two that never become a Three) without

thinking a third element (the Three), and allowing the One to remain One within the inexorable and tragic destiny of the Two. This fragmented multiplicity shall never completely return to its original oneness. This essay intends to retrace the origin of a speculation that represented an alternative to Hegel's philosophy. Schelling's ideas run through Western philosophy, and reappear in several philosophers. From Kant to Kierkegaard; from Rosenzweig to Scholem; from Heidegger to Tillich; from Merleau-Ponty to Pareyson. We also find Schelling's influence in existential philosophy, in hermeneutics, in the philosophy of the tragic. Schelling seeks a way to think the unconditional condition of the conditional (the totality of the empirical and the unity of its lawfulness) from within our situation. In this situation we know for sure that our existence and our thought both rest on the conditional. We cannot conceive the One in itself because we are placed within a situation in which its division already took place.

This problem is also the problem of our impossibility to think the unconditional condition of the possibility of thought and existence *from the point of view of our situation.* In order to achieve this goal we must begin a difficult journey through the conditional. Philosophy, in its daring movement through the conditional, constantly questions the relation (or the connection) between the conditional and the unconditional. In Schelling's case this relation is defined with two names: *opposition* or *contrast (Entgegensetzung)* and *separation (Trennung).*

The first and decisive aspect of this critical questioning is represented by an aspect of this relation that visibly appears to be the Two. This relation *cannot be the mere position of two terms* (the unconditional and absolute beginning and principle on the one hand and the dependent and passive conditional on the other). Schelling's relation is very different and quite paradoxical: the unconditional cannot be without the conditional, and the unconditional condition is nothing without the conditional. Thus in this relation both terms are reciprocally and mutually essential and necessary. The consequence is that our thought must immediately deal with what is looking for from within the original estrangement caused by the original fracture. Our thought moves its steps within the relation that imposes the thought of the absolute. *The unconditional-absolute can be grasped only through its separation and the loss of its unconditionality. The unconditional is thinkable only through its invisible presence in the conditional.* Both terms are necessary. The unconditional (the infinite) and the conditional (the finite) are inextricably connected by their reciprocal necessity. Thus the original unconditional is *the relation as such.* In Schelling's thought, absolute and unchanging Unity cannot be conceived as the primeval reality. The One is never a Third, and the relation is not a third element but the unity, the

identity and, paradoxically, the difference of its two terms. The beginning of the two terms makes them possible and real.

The second aspect of Schelling's quest is that the one who asks the question (man and/or the critical philosopher) doesn't inhabit neither the point of view of the absolute (that is, the unconditional condition of the conditional) nor the point of view of the conditional/finite. Schelling acknowledges that philosophy moves its steps on a shaky and precarious ground, but this ground (that shall eventually lead the philosopher to ecstatic amazement and reflection) is not the mere ground of a meaningless conditional. According to Schelling, philosophy begins with the paradoxical relation between the conditional and the unconditional, and not from one of the two terms. The philosopher shares his starting point and his emotional situation with the common man. However, the philosopher asks the fundamental question: *why (and how) being and not nothingness?*

Schelling tells us that the philosopher that radically questions this paradoxical relation also points out and shows the condition of existence, that is, the condition in which we find ourselves entangled *in the relation between what we are and what we feel we should be – or what we merely feel.*

Therefore philosophy is neither an activity that rests on the determined conditional, articulated in its various forms, nor an activity of the spirit whose fundament rests on the unconditional. Philosophy represents an activity that takes the radical risk to be on the boundary of two terms that are paradoxically necessary and unavoidable. Philosophy adheres to life through its effort of comprehension, that very effort that to the external eye seems to build a wall between life and the philosophical quest. The point of view of critical philosophy is that of the paradox of the relation between an almost too visible conditional and an unconditional shrouded in obscurity, that is, the obscurity caused by the visibility of the conditional. This would not be a problem if, as Schelling says, we were not a part of this paradoxical opposition. Schelling aims at thinking (and to think already means to be rooted in separation) each one of the terms through the other.

The conditional must be understood through the unconditional, and the unconditional through the conditional. Thus we must recognize that our being is a being *within the paradoxical separation* of what we are and what we feel we should be. In doing so, we understand that our existence and our knowledge do not rest neither on an immediate metaphysical intuition of the Whole (the point of view of the unconditional), nor no the precarious situation of the conditional (the point of view of determined knowledge). Our existence is grounded on something that is far more difficult and dangerous: it rests on the paradox that forces us into a position from which

we cannot privilege any of the two terms. We will never be able to completely bridge the gap created by the original separation.

Schelling's philosophy takes this risk, and stretches it to its extreme limit. Schelling aims at developing simultaneously the two sides of separation. On the one hand Schelling dares to think the unconditional through the conditional (i.e., he begins from experience in order to understand its condition of possibility). The re-enacting mechanism of this synthesis is the same mechanism of every critical philosophy that questions itself. Even more interestingly, the young philosopher dares to think the conditional through the unconditional. In this shortsighted age of the apology of what exists, this approach is almost completely abandoned.

Schelling is well aware of the impossibility to reach the point of view of the unconditional; however, he dares to do so anyway, in order to think the possibility of the conditional and of its being. How is this possible? Schelling knows very well the point of view of critical philosophy, if compared with the dogmatic procedure of reason in its pure knowledge. He also deeply respects Kant's criticism and the general plan expounded in the *Preface* of the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason.*

Schelling's philosophical point of view is neither the point of view of the finite, nor the point of view of the infinite. It is the point of view of the finite-infinite and of their paradoxical opposition as such. This is the most inexorable and tragic conflict. Schelling places its trust in a very dangerous and daring idea: the conditional stems from the unconditional and it can be understood through the unconditional. Schelling can be certainly considered an "optimist" philosopher (after all he doesn't renounce to seek the light of the absolute); his system, however, does not rest on an external, incomprehensible, mysterious *totaliter alter.*

This is the sense of the paradox. The unconditional, the infinite and initial condition, is constantly present within the fabric of the conditional, and challenges philosophy to seek the unconditional from within the world of experience. The unconditional must be sought from within the tragic condition of temporality. Philosophy must feed itself with the nostalgia of absolute immanence, and mustn't evoke the unconditional as a ghost that would turn us into paralyzed statues of salt.

Schelling's absolute-unconditional cannot be an object for dogmatic speculation. It doesn't belong to any metaphysical ambit: it is placed within the paradoxical and unavoidable opposition that is the object of a critical philosophy that evolves into a transcendental idealism.

Aesthetics is the philosophy that sees the conditional-unconditional opposition in its identity and difference. This philosophy doesn't see the work of art as an external object: it remains within the mechanism of re-enactment that questions and re-comprehends its paradoxical relation with

the conditional. The work of art is seen as an object; thus it is extremely important to understand how these objects are produced through the movement that repeats the relation between the conditional and the unconditional.

Aesthetics is the main, if not the absolute, protagonist of this book. Aesthetics appears at the end of this book, but this is not a mere theatrical *escamotage*. At least since the year 1800, Schelling's speculation can be understood and interpreted as the effort to build an Aesthetics, conceived as a comprehensive philosophical theory and not a mere philosophy of art. I always tried to adhere strictly to Schelling's text in order to support the exigencies of our spirit *with his spirit* and *against his spirit.* The exposition of the genealogy of an idea is usually more productive and stimulating than its representation as a datum.

Rome, January 2004

Leonardo V. Distaso

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To Grazia Maria, I confirm my vows and everything else that is left unsaid.

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Chapter 1

THE DISSERTATION OF 1792 ON THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

1. Prologue in Heaven

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling began his studies at the Stift, the protestant theological college in Tübingen, in 1790, when he was 15 years old. Hölderlin and Hegel, who were 5 years older, had entered the college in 1788. The Stift of Tübingen was a protestant university college strongly characterized by pietistic religiosity, that excelled in philosophical and theological studies; its courses lasted respectively two and three years. Schelling, was not Hölderlin's and Hegel's coetaneous, but frequented them assiduously, sharing with them the *Augustineurstube,* the passions and the rigid teachings of the period. He studied, assimilated and eventually rejected the theological and philosophical structure of the Tübingen studies, actively contributing to the alchemies of a sodality that shall generate extraordinary fruits for the destinies of the European philosophy[1]. Schelling immediately

[1] For a detailed description of the Stift theological and philosophical studies see D. Henrich, *Philosophisch-theologische Problemlagen im Tübinger Stift zur Studienzeit Hegels, Hölderlins und Schellings,* in *Konstellationen. Probleme und Debatten am Ursprung der idealistischen Philosophie (1789-1795),* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), 171-213; Brecht, J. Sandberger, *Hegels Begegnung mit der Theologie im tübinger Stift,* in "Hegel-Studien", 5, 1969, 47-81; C. Jamme, *Hegel e Hölderlin,* in *Mitologie della Ragione,* edited by M. Cometa (Pordenone: Studio Tesi, 1989): W.G. Jacobs, *Zwischen Revolution un Orthodoxie? Schelling und seine Freunde im Stift und an der Universität Tübingen. Texte und Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog,1989). See also the excellent essay by C. Lacorte, *Il primo Hegel* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1959), that provides consistent information concerning the cultural environment in Tübingen. See also *Realenencyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche,* XX, 148 and ff., sub vocem

found himself at conflict with the Stift environment. This is confirmed by the epistolary with Hegel between the winters of 1794 and 1796. In a famous letter to Schelling[2], who was still at Stift, (December 24, 1794) Hegel wrote that the current criticism against Kant's doctrine of religion, merely reproduced old systems, and restored an obsolete and uncritical dogmatism. Hegel also wrote that these positions could influence only "mechanical heads", i.e. those who didn't think critically, and didn't have any interest in the progress of philosophy, and who reproduced what was taught to them in order to keep their conservative spirit intact. Schelling's reply, written on the day of Epiphany of 1795, strengthened the dose. Schelling reproached the Kantians in Tübingen for having superficially extracted some elements from Kant's system without any comprehension. Schelling was thinking particularly about the axioms of Practical Reason transformed into postulates of Reason itself, and combined with the dogmas and superstitions of positive and natural religion. The result was the complete dry-up of the plant of philosophy, carried out in the name of a moral and religious despotism, based on the presupposition that only an initiatic knowledge could be the foundation of every form of philosophical idea and intelligence. Only the courage of the Enlightenment, the affirmation of one's own freedom and critical reason could lead to the advent of a superior religion and of a "new" philosophy. According to Schelling, this "new" philosophy could impose itself only with a "new Socrates", capable of thoroughly penetrating Kant's thought and surpassing his philosophy. The "new Socrates" exalted by Schelling was incarnated by Fichte: they probably met in Tübingen during Fichte's visits to the college on the 12th of June 1793 and on the 2nd of May 1794[3]. The Stift environment was absolutely inadequate to the new students' hopes of innovation. The tight web of dogmatism was about to be lacerated by the young Hegel's inquiries on practical reason and by its theoretical and practical development in Schelling[4].

Tübingen Schule, particularly for the information concerning the influence of subjective religion: G. Ch. Storr (*Neue Apologie der Offenbarung Johannis,* 1783), one of its most important representatives stressed the absolute priority of biblical exegesis, in order to strengthen the role of orthodoxy and theocratic authority and to lay a foundation for a dogmatic of positive religion, rationally indemonstrable, and completely belonging to the sphere of the supernatural reveled .

[2] *Briefe von und an Hegel,* I-III, hrsg. v. J. Hoffmeister, (Hamburg 1952).

[3] *Aus Schellings Leben.* In *Briefen,* hrsg. V. G. L. Plitt, 3 Bde (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869-1870), I, 13; see also F. W. J. Schelling. *Briefe und Dokumente,* hrsg. V. H. Fuhrmans, 4 Bde (Bonn: Bouvier, 1962), II, 56 ff. see also Schelling's letter to Hegel written on July 21st , 1795.

[4] For Hegel's and Schelling's relationship with Kant's practical reason see G. Lukács, *Der junge Hegel und die Probleme der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Luchterhand,

The Stift students were requested to complete their philosophy biennium with the discussion of a dissertation written by a professor *(Magisterdissertation)* and defending two brief papers written by the candidate *(Magisterspecimena)* in front of a commission *(Examen rigorosus).* The passing of this exam granted the access to the triennium of the theological faculty. On the 17th of September 1790 Hölderlin discussed two writings: *Parallele zwischen Salomons "Sprüchwörtern" und Hesiods "Werken und Tagen",* and *Geschichte der schönen Künste unter den griechen bis zu Ende des Perikleischen Zeitalters*[5]. His mentor was Professor Ch. Schnurrer, the Stift Ephorus, one of the most open and progressive professors of the College[6]. Hegel also became *Magister philosophiae* discussing on the 21st of September of the same year a dissertation written by A. F. Bök[7] and two papers written by himself: *Über das Urteil des gemeinen Menschenverstands über Objektivität und subjektivität der Vorstellungen, and Über das Studium der Geschichte Der Philosophie*[8].

In September 1792 Schelling, who was younger than Hegel and Hölderlin, discussed a thesis with Schnurrer. Schelling was only 17 years old, and demonstrating an extraordinary precocity wrote his thesis all by himself: *De prima malorum humanorum origine philosophematis Gen. III explicandi tentamen criticum et philosophicum.* It was a comment on the 3rd

1967); *The Young Hegel,* trans. By R. Livingstone (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1976); J. Sanderberger, *Hegels Begegnung mit der Theologie im Tübinger Stift,* "Hegel Studien", 5/1969, 47-81; M. Brecht, *Die Anfänge der idealistischen Philosophie und die Rezeption Kants in Tübingen (1788-1795),* in *500 Jahre Eberhards-Karls Universität Tübingen,* hrsg. see. H. Decker-Hauff (Tübingen, 1977); R. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel,* (Tübingen, 1921), in part. I, 535-612; W. Szilasi, *Schellings Anfänge und die Andeutung seines Anliegens,* in "Studia Philosophica", XIV, 1954, 51-67, G. Semerari, *La valutazione schellinghiana della Critica di Kant negli scritti del 1795,* in "aut-aut", 48, 1958, 310-322. Other information, based on reliable documentation can be found in the book written by P. Härtling, H*ölderlin* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1978).

[5] The texts are in F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe hrsg. v. F. Beissner, 8 Bde (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1946 ff.), Bd. 4.1, 176-188 and Bd. 4.1, 189-206.

[6] Concerning Schnurrer see F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 7.1, and documents n. 66 and n. 67. 404-410. Some notes concerning the dissertations can be also found in document n. 73, 414-416.

[7] Bök's dissertation title was *De limite officiorum humanorum seposita animorum immortalitate.* A summary of its content was published in "Tübingische gelehrte Anzeige" whose responsible was Schnurrer, 98/1790, 777-779. See also J. H. Fichte, *Hegels philosophische Magisterdissertation und sein Verhältnis zu Schelling,* "Zeitschrift für Philosophie und speculative Theologie", 12/1844.

[8] For the dating of young Hegel's writings at Stift see G. Schüler, *Zur Chronologie von Hegels Jugendschriften,* "Hegel-Studien", 1963, 111-159.

chapter of the Book of Genesis[9], accompanied with the usual two papers: *Über die Möglichkeit einer Philosophie ohne Beinamen, nebst einigen Bemerkungen über die Reinoldische Elementarphilosophie, and Über die Übereinstimmung der Critik der theoretischen und praktischen Vernunft, besonders in Bezug auf den Gebrauch der Categorien, und der Realisierung der Idee einer intelligibeln Welt durch ein Factum in der lezteren*[10]. The writing on the origin of evil can be considered Schelling's first philosophical work. Even though Schelling was completing his biennium in philosophy, his first works, considering the confessional orientation of Stift, had to have a theological character. However, it wouldn't be correct to talk of a corpus of Schelling's theological writings. In his first years of study he explored theology with enthusiasm, focusing his attention –as he would reveal to Hegel in his letter of the Epiphany of 1795– on the historical and exegetical researches on the Bible, and particularly on the golden spirit of the first Christian communities. This spirit was later confirmed by Schelling himself, in his *Epikurisch Glaubennsbekenntniss Heinz Widerpostens* (1799); it's is one of the key elements of the philosophical interpretation of mythology[11]. Schelling chose a critical and philosophical approach to the sacred texts, and he initially welcomed the historical-scientific method, that studied the psychological role of imagination and the demonstration of the simplicity of the language in primitive peoples. This method was followed in Germany by Heyne's and Eichorn's "School of Göttingen", whose merits consist, above all, in rethinking myth in a rational light, i.e. as the necessary and dawning phase of the attempt of a young humanity to frame in a narrative context the beginning of the world[12]. On the other hand, in these Schelling's early

[9] *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe* (HKA) im Auftrag der Schelling-Kommission der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, hrsg v. H. M. Baumgartner, W. G. Jacobs, H. Krings, H. Zeltner (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976 ff.); HKA I, 59-100. For a description of the editions of Schelling's work see L. Pareyson, *La nuova edizione storico-critica di Schelling,* "Filosofia", 30/1979, 45-90, and the useful information in W. *Jacobs F.W.J. Schelling. Edition historique critique de l'Académie Bavaroise des Sciences,* "Archives de Philosophie", 38/1975, 401-408. Perhaps Schnurrer was the professor with whom Schelling developed the strongest relationship. See H. Fuhrmans, *F.W.J. Schelling, Briefe und Dokumente,* I,/10-14.

[10] L. Pareyson, *Schellingiana Rariora,* Gesammelt und eingeleit, L. Pareyson, *Philosophica Varia Inedita Vel Rariora* (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1977), 32-33. For information on Schelling's curriculum vitae see see also F.W.J. Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente,* I/41. We shall not make direct references to these brief papers, that were written only for academic purposes.

[11] F.W.J. Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente,* 205-214.

[12] V. Verra, *Mito, rivelazione e filosofia in J. H. Herder e nel suo tempo* (Milano: Marzorati, 1966), 77-80, with also the expression of esteem for Schelling's writing by Gabler and Bauer; M. Cometa, *"Um also zu träume, seyd nüchtern". Mitologie della ragione, J.G.*

writings there are also some evident influences by Herder, particularly concerning the identification of myth with the original state of humanity, from which poetical truth (a specific characteristic of the narrative exigency of myth), emerges as a foundation. The letter also shows that Schelling's rapprochement to philosophy was about to be accomplished. Leaving aside the theological studies and the ecclesiastic career, Schelling concluded his studies in theology with the dissertation *De Marcione Paullinarum Epistolarum Emendatore*[13].

The writing on the origin of moral evil is important because it presents for the first time some conceptual figures that will accompany Schelling throughout its entire philosophical journey, and through which the philosopher realized his system. In this dissertation Schelling also deals with one of the emerging problems of the post-leibnizian and post-spinozian philosophy of the period, with a speculative and existential form that is one of the matrixes of the system of transcendental idealism[14].

Schelling doesn't consider the story of the Genesis an invention of poetical fantasy, but a myth, whose philosophical content must be brought to light in its tautegoric form. Thus the work of interpretation becomes the analysis of the truth expressed by myth. This truth cannot be reduced it to its rational and conceptual elements, and its sensible nature must be pointed out (HKA I, 212-213; 220-222). Schelling justifies and legitimates the mythical form of the philosophema, admitting that this form was the only one that humanity could use to answer its questions, such as the question concerning the presence of evil in the world. There is also another justification for myth as the only possible expression of the first philosophemata of a pre-

Herder, Mitologie della ragione, edited by M. Cometa (Pordenone: Studio Tesi, 1989), 31-93; C. Cesa, *La filosofia politica di Schelling* (Bari: Laterza, 1969), 30-40; S. Dietsch, *Zum Mythos-Problem beim frühen Schelling,* "Wissenschaftlische Zeitschrift. Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftlische Reihe", 1, 1976, 127-130; A. E. Horstmann, *Mythologie und Altertumswissenschaft: Der Mythosbegriff bei C.G. Heyne,* "Archiv für Begriffgeschichte", 16/1972, 60-85; W.G. Jacobs, *Gottesbegriff und Geschichtsphilosophie in der Sicht Schelling* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1993); L. Marino, / *maestri della Germania* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), 254-287; T. Griffero, *Senso e immagine. Simbolo e mito nel primo Schelling* (Milano: Guerini, 1994), 213-227.

[13] For further information about Schelling's juvenile theological studies see G. Semerari, *Interpretazione di Schelling* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1958), 4-9; X. Tilliette, *Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir* (Paris: Vrin, 1970), II/517; L. Pareyson, *Schelling, presentazione e antologia* (Torino: Marietti,1984); L. Procesi, *Il mito nel lessico giovanile schellingiano,* "Lexicon Philosophicum. Quaderni di terminologia filosofica e storia delle idee", 3/1988, 5-17.

[14] See L. Pareyson's last work, *Ontologia della libertà* (Torino: Einaudi, 1995) and its corollary, F. Tomatis, *Ontologia del male. L'ermeneutica in Pareyson* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1995).

philosophical humanity: myth is the most adequate form for the synthesis of theoretical reason and the faculty to perceive the world as a present and objective whole, i.e. a world as object of the Sinnlickeit.

In his essay *Über Mythen,* published on H. E. Paulus' "Memorabilien"(1793)[15] exactly one year after his dissertation, Schelling sees in myth the primitive configuration of the *Weltanschauung* of the youth of humanity, a youth of *naïveté* and simplicity. This spontaneity of sensibility and the feeling of unity with nature could express itself only through a form that is a "doctrine, illustration/presentation of truth" (HKA I, 212), and not through a system or science (the dominion of logos). Myth is also the first form through which man confronted the natural world in the attempt to elaborate a vision, to impose to the world a meaning through an image, and to understand it as a poietically revealed unity through the wonderful narration of immediacy (HKA I, 204 and 233)[16]. It wouldn't therefore make any sense to substitute the philosophical content of myth with a philosophical form based on the discursive and demonstrative intellect. Those who wrote the Book of Genesis had only one way to express and shape the *philosophema* in order to transmit it and keep it alive. The revelatory, symbolic and analogical value of myth (and its oral expression) is one and only thing with the sapiential content, i.e. the truth of the myth of the Book of Genesis: the fall of man in the negative, the result of the division that originally took place between sensibility and intellect, between sensible and intelligible humanity, between innocent *status naturae* and limitation of the senses. The indissoluble nexus between radical evil and suffering is revealed by this relationship: by finding ourselves within the realm of the negative and by recognizing its reality through the growing awareness of our situation in this world, and the need to give it a sense, once the total plenitude of sense of the age of pre-origin is lost (HKA , 67-68).

Schelling's analysis doesn't rationalize the content of the mosaic saga, and doesn't analyze its text within the conditions of truth, but seeks the internal condition of myth itself. Myth is characterized by a linguistic horizon whose value and effectiveness keep the sense of the Whole within the purely aesthetic sense of the *Sinnlichkeit,* and retrieves the sensible truth

[15] *Über Mythen, historische Sagen und Pilosopheme der ältesten Welt,* "Memorabilien", V/1-68. Thus myth is nothing but a sensible configuration of a philosophical speculation, whose persuasive character goes beyond the rigorous conceptuality of demonstrative knowledge (als ein zu Versinnlichung einer philosophischen Spekulation gedichteter Mythus ist" HKA I, 209).This writing gave Hegel the opportunity to reactivate his contacts with Schelling during Christmas of 1794. The contacts had been interrupted after Hegel's departure for Bern.

[16] X.Tilliette, *La mythologie comprise* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1984), 13-16.

in the finite time of history and the ages of reason. Schelling will show the nostalgia and the memory lingering within the "sensibilization" of truth *from within* the Genesis myth. In the 5th paragraph of the *Dissertation* Schelling points out that the beginning of moral evil coincides with the condition in which man finds himself after the fall and the detachment from Eden. This means that that the origin of evil coincides with the origin of unhappiness, that is the natural and essential condition of man after the fall HKA I, 77).

Schelling, following the text of the book of Genesis, limits himself to an analysis of moral evil (i.e. *radical evil*) and, according to the Kantian distinction, leaves the question of original evil untouched, *(Über das radikale Böse in der menschlischen Natur).* In the book of Genesis 3:1, we read that the serpent, the most astute of creatures, tempts the woman into committing sin. The serpent is the symbol of the devil fulfilling his mission (even though his action is limited by God's will) and dragging man towards evil[17]. Absolute evil preexists man. The serpent was created before man. God allows this original *factum* that challenges *Adàm Qadmòn,* the original man. The tree in the center of the garden, whose fruits have the magical power to open the eyes, allows man to know good and evil, and to realize his pretense to be as God (Genesis, 3:3).

To be as God consists in knowing the difference between good and evil, and in judging in conformity with the highest divine justice, and therefore blocking the way of evil. Man cannot do this in the Garden. The Book of Genesis doesn't provide any explanation for this detail. We do not know why man in Eden could not tell the difference between good and evil, and act accordingly, as God does. We can try to provide an explanation. Man can't be as God, even though he lives in Eden, because he's a creature, i.e. he didn't choose to exist. Man, notwithstanding the fact that he lives within a condition of absolute privilege and immediacy within the Divine Unity, can't identify himself with God completely. If we follow Pareyson, we can say that man in Eden (in his identity of necessity and freedom) is absolutely not free to accomplish the original act. Only God can do such a thing. In this act there is an identification of God's being and existence; His affirmation as positive element (His choice of good), His refusal of the other alternative (the elimination of evil), His overcoming of the negative (His victory over nothingness)"[18].

The salvation plan fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth (John, 3:1-21) reveals to man his divine essence (John, 10: 34-39: "I said, Ye are gods"; John 20: 22-

[17] Job, 1 and 3; Matthew, 4: 3 and ff., 12: 19-39; John, 8: 44; Revelation, 12: 9. See also Job, 1: 12; 2: 6; Mark, 5: 12-13; Revelation, 20: 7.

[18] L. Pareyson, *Ontologia della libertà,* op. cit., 176.

23: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"); his possibility of salvation through faith and works (Matthew, 5:1-48; Luke, 6:20-49) and the final divinity of the world, according to the doctrine that says that after Christ's advent, the world is saved and redeemed (Luke, 17:20-21: "for behold the Kingdom of God is within you"; John, 12:46-47: "for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world"). Schelling stops here, in his analysis of the fall. He concludes with the important, but limited, acknowledgement of the reality of the negative mundane element in the dialectic of the concrete. He doesn't venture beyond this point. He will take this step only in his late philosophy of mythology[19]. Despite this fact, the negative is surely, in Schelling's juvenile phase, an ideal of totality and improvement of humanity, whose goal is the realization of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Therefore I think that this element, connected to the "God in ourselves" of revolutionary spinozism, that the scholars have always seen only in Hegel and Hölderlin, is also present, *in nuce,* in the young Schelling's convictions[20].

Evil preexists man in Eden: in the form of the serpent and in the desire to know the difference between good and evil, a knowledge that only God can have[21]. The devil himself is nothing but an angel, who fell because he wanted to be as God, in the attempt to dominate the eternal will, twisting to his favor the dangling of the difference between good and evil. He thus becomes the *ad-versarius,* the *ad-versus* prince. This demonic dominion is not the result of an act of ignorance (as the act of man and woman is in the

[19] *Sämmtliche Werke,* (SW) (Stuttgart u. Augsburg: Cotta'scher Ver1ag,1856-1861); SW XII, Vorlesung 8.

[20] See *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 3, 29; G. F. W. Hegel, *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften,* hrsg. V. H. Nohl (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907), 225; *The Positivity of the Christian Religion, Early Theological Writings,* trans. by T.H. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 159: "Apart from some earlier attempts, it has been reserved in the main for our epoch to vindicate at least in theory the human ownership of the treasures formerly squandered on heaven [...]". See also D. Heinrich, *Der Grund in Bewußtsen. Untersuchungen zu Hölderlin Denken (1794-1795),* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), in part. 23-31. There is also an important contribution by M. Wagenast, *Hölderlins Spinoza-Rezeption, und ihre Bedeutung für die Konzeption des "Hyperion"* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1990).

[21] Luke, 4: 5-8; L. Pareyson, *Ontologia della libertà,* op. cit., 169-170. It must be said that there are also the rabbinical interpretations concerning the serpent as the male genital organ, with the subsequent prohibition of sexual intercourse outside a strict and sanctified necessity. This interpretation, that Schelling doesn't mention, proposes the theme of the separation of the sexes and the introduction of generation through the coitus. This sin of pride, bred within the sphere if sensual pleasures, shows the idea, which common to many cultures, that the union of man and woman can reproduce the unity that was lost in the origin. In Hölderlin, there are two figures, Diothima and Melites that shall enlighten Hyperion's heart, seeking the restoration of the lost unity.

garden of Eden) but an act of rebellion and of affirmation of the negative (Luke, 6: 5-8). The absolutely preexisting evil, for which there no explanation is a postulate of the abysmal origin of the world, can also be called *ontological or original evil*[22]. We only know that this evil is second only to God's preexistence; God determined evil, wanted it, and allowed its existence. Its image is the fruit on a tree, a symbol of what it must and mustn't be. This tree is something very dear to God, and very close to Him: so dear and so close, in fact, that the man, in his original condition, can't and mustn't approach it. The tree symbolizes the totality of the divine itself, its plenitude in the indissoluble unity of distinction. At the same time the tree is the way through which it's possible to know this unity through the fundamental distinction: the difference between good and evil, between what must and mustn't be, a knowledge that pertains only to God. The book of Genesis, concerning original evil, doesn't go any further.

There is also another determinant element in the image that the Book of Genesis reveals. The story says that the woman is convinced by the serpent to eat the fruit, and then she convinces man to do the same. They are both tempted by the knowledge of the difference between good and evil, and the temptation takes place with a gesture of an extreme symbolic value: they *opened their eyes,* and found themselves naked, ashamed of their new condition. It's very important to understand the close relation between the knowledge of good and evil through the opening of the eyes (i.e. seeing the world with new eyes) and God's immediate and violent reaction, chasing Adam and Eve out of the garden. First of all it seems that the beginning of knowledge depends on vision; and then it seems that man in Eden was previously deprived of sight, i.e. his vision of the world around him wasn't a vision with wisdom, but an absolute adhesion to things with no separation (something similar to the blindness of the mystics' beatitude: a non-separation of human faculties). Finally, there's God's violent reaction to man's acquisition of sight, as if the possession of the distinction allowed him to see God, which is something far and beyond merely feeling His presence: *it must be impossible* to see God with physical eyes and therefore giving Him a name.

There is also another element, often misinterpreted, that broadens the picture. Man calls his female companion *Eve* (Genesis, 3:20), that in Hebrew means *Life.* This means that somehow, the new mundane horizon in which man finds himself, is nothing else but life, man's new condition. Eve, who

[22] L. Pareyson, *Ontologia della libertà,* op. cit., 184-185, 217. See also Ibid., 235-292 for the problem of evil in God, stemming from the duplicitous and ambiguous character of God's duplicity.

let herself to be led into temptation becomes man's post-Eden condition. She is the life that dragged man out of his garden, where he lived happily. The state of conscience of difference and the acquisition of wisdom (Genesis, 3:6) are provoked by what can be called an original and absolutely incomprehensible call to life that, from God's point of view (according to the author of the Book of Genesis) is identified with the act of the fall into mundane life through the original sin, and the definitive separation from the garden of joy. Human history, in which the seed of the future dialectic between nature and freedom has been sown, begins with the loss of the state of innocence[23].

Now man lives: he is born amidst pain and spasms, he grows and works to feed himself amidst difficulties, lives a life of sufferings, tears, and direct contact with earth: a life of evil. At the same time man yearns for a primitive happiness; there's the burning memory of a time of bliss, that now stands in front of our consciousness as a continuously pursued ideal. This is the condition that can be called of radical evil; the evil fills existence within the horizon of the negative, but it is also the result of God's original decision to let man free, chasing him out of Eden and throwing him in the sphere of his realization; this sphere is the history (the horizon of limitation) in which man acts and lives. By seizing the fruit of the tree of life *Adàm Quadmòn* is thrown into *limitation:* the attempt to be as God is punished by man's limitation. The fall is therefore the origin of limitation and of radical evil, and the beginning of human reason on the foundation of freedom, that in time turns out to be a gift too great for man, who must build upon it the structure of his existence *(Daseyn).*

The origin of radical or moral evil can be explained with *Adàm Quadmòn's* separation from Eden, with the detachment from the happy and

[23] HKA I, 78-79 and 85. There are evident references to authors that Schelling read during his studies, and that influenced his writing: J. J. Rousseau, *Du contract social ou Principes du droit politique (Oeuvres complètes,* III, 281-346; *On the Social Contract, Basic Political Writings,* trans. by D.A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publish Co., 1987); F. Schiller, *Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach Leitfaden der mosaischen Urkunde* (1790), *Werke und Briefe,* Bd. 6, hrsg. v. O. Dann (Frankfurt a. m.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2000), 432-450 (an interpretation of the fall as division from instinct, and the manifestation of man's free activity, and the beginning of his moral life). Above all see J.G. Herder, *Über Geist der Ëbraischen Poesie, Werke,* Bd. 5, hrsg. v. R. Smend, (Frankfurt a. M.,: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-1995), 661-1308, and *Ältestes Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts,* Ibid., Bd. 5, 179-660. See also S. Dietzsch, *Le probléme du mythe chez le jeune Schelling,* "Archives de Philosophie", 38/1975, 395-400; P. Kondylis, *Die Entstehung der Dialektik. Eine Analyse der geistigen Entwicklung von Hölderlin, Schelling und Hegel bis 1802* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), particularly 19-129.

immediate condition of the primeval man, and with the new condition of scission. In this condition there is a distinction between good and evil; therefore it's necessary to act within this distinction, with the obligation to choose within the context of a perennial alternative, following the indications provided by the destiny of reason, and not by a purely sensible and a-conceptual state.

The myth of Genesis tells the story of God's self-limitation and the act of creation of the *Cosmos* and man. In the beginning man ignores creation: his happiness stems from this condition of immediacy, in which there is no distinction between reality and possibility, between necessity and freedom. But when man wants to be as God and opens his eyes, he becomes aware of the separation that God has produced through creation, and he also loses his innocence, falling in the original separation between God and the *totaliter alter* from God. On one hand man becomes aware of what it's not God, and on the other hand this "being something else than God" is present in the original act of consciousness. This awareness is the essence of the original sin. The fall places man in a condition of separateness in which he has to deal with the continuous resistance of reality, split into good and evil. The origin of radical evil also explains man's ethical responsibility, who is continuously obliged to choose between good and evil. This choice didn't exist in Eden, because man totally adhered to necessity. Now man is obliged to measure existence without a privileged relation with necessity; not only he must act, but he's also free to follow or break the law (Romans, 5:12-21; I Timothy, 1: 8-11). This choice is a torment, because its exigency arises after the opposition; this choice is a burden of responsibility, that puts to the test man's tragic relation with freedom and forces him to live, and to act in a theoretical-practical manner, i.e. making decisions stemming from the initial free act, that was a choice conflicting with reality.

Schelling is well aware of the scenario of the myth of Genesis, and he understands its consequences. Thus he begins with the problem of the origin of evil. He questions the detachment from Eden, the fall on the earth and the opening of the eyes, that allowed the living to see the separation between the inevitability of evil and the idea of good and the loss of the original simplicity with no conscience.

Radical evil is the product of the forced separation from Eden. Schelling acknowledges that immediate happiness, a fruit of the indetermination of unconscious existence, is an unhappiness that is neither absolute nor eternal, and he calls it *natural* (HKA I 78-79). This unhappiness stems from the necessity to choose between good and evil, a choice that implies the acceptance of separation and the assumption of responsibility on the foundation of freedom. On one hand Schelling describes the primeval and edenic state of nature, that is the kingdom of innocence and unawareness of

separation: a state of a complete adherence to the world. There is no question concerning the relationship between man and nature, because this relationship, strictly speaking, doesn't exist. Man lives in a condition of perfect harmony and simultaneity with nature. On the other hand, Schelling provides a description of the dynamics of the state of reason, the life condition in which man realizes the degrees of separation of his Daseyn through the path of the progressive dominion on external reality. This detachment becomes a discord at the moment in which, after the separation, in the ambit of life, in order to perform the difficult but inevitable duty to choose between good and evil, the conflict arises between senses and intellect, immediacy and mediation, unconscious and conscious (HKA I, 82-83; 233-234).

The conflict opens the way, in Schelling's words, for the history of humanity. This history is characterized by the awareness of freedom, that marching through history, opposes itself to the natural and immediate necessity of the golden age of the sensible adherence. The result is that the history of humanity is nothing but the history of freedom, or more precisely: freedom in history is the development of the continuous necessity to act as an essential moment of the separated human condition. This is what Schelling acknowledges as the tragic condition of human existence, suspended between the nostalgic memory of a life of beatitude and the anguishing uncertainty of the necessity to choose.

The introduction of history is accompanied by the idea of ratio, and Schelling, with a courageous interpretation, translates the separation between good and evil into the separation between sensibility and intellect, transforming it into opposition (*Entgegengesetzung;* HKA I, 94). There can't be a primacy of sensibility as the guide of the conscience in the situation of earthly man: this primacy leads man to be a slave of his passions, of his self-love and egoism. Man is therefore driven to build a society ruled by authority and founded on reason (HKA, I, 97). Perhaps Schelling thought the conciliation between world and rationality possible, notwithstanding the fact that this conciliation must be realized within the totality of the human world and within the realization of the unity of the ends of reason. Schelling is interested in the process that generated reason, going back to its origin, to the state of immediate unity; the conciliation of reason and sensibility is not a return to Eden (in Schelling's view this would be impossible and meaningless) but a project of a higher unity of ideal and reality, a unity that Schelling will pursue constantly throughout his philosophical journey. The first formulation of this unity can be found in the interpretation of the myth of the fall. According to Schelling man works in order to substitute in himself the corrupted *spontaneitas* of the senses with the dominion of reason, a faculty that repeats the detachment consciously, attempting to

overcome it and to bring back man, at least ideally, to the horizon of the virtues of the primeval golden age.

The first step of this journey is the phase in which man elaborates his language, develops arts and techniques as the bases of a *culture* founded on the intellectual faculty of judgment and on the sense of beauty. The following step is the consolidation of the faculty of judgment through which it will be possible to enter the age or reason: a new organic homogeneity of sensibility and intellect that every people shall conquer according to its own possibilities (HKA I, 96-99).

The theoretical point utilized by Schelling is the accord between Kant's dualism of the faculties and Leibniz's monadology[24]. Schelling explains the detachment from Eden as the origin of the *separation of the faculties.* This separation, universally present in every single man, is repeated in humanity. What modifies the individual modifies humanity[25]. This unity of singular and universal, implied in the idea of the human soul as the mirror of totality, mustn't be seen as an analogy between the internal and psychical of the individual and the history of humanity. It must be understood as the idea that the individual human soul (or spirit) possessing a reason, mirrors internally the idea of a pre-established harmony of the monadologic unities, in an analogy between internal and external, between what in ourselves is limited and what in God is unlimited, between the being that we call the *self* and the being as *substance,* or as *simple*[26]. In other words, the analogy of the soul's internal unity and the harmonic unity of the souls' infinite multiplicity is the mirror of the totality of the universe, that only a spirit of the whole can conceive at the highest level, mirroring the image of divinity itself[27]. The fall and the exit from the stage in which the sensible dimension of man is predominant, creates the distinction of the knowledge faculties and the beginning of what we can call "the age of reason".

The original opposition is transformed into the opposition between intellect and sensibility, spontaneous freedom and natural necessity, meditation of speculative reason and immediacy of perception. The conflict that took place with the detachment of the happy realm dominated by immediate sensibility is transformed into the conflict between nature and

[24] Hölderlin, who began reading Leibniz attentively at the end of 1790, probably suggested Schelling to study this author. See HKA I, 86-88.

[25] See I. Vecchiotti, *Lo schellinghiano "De Humanorum malorum origine" e la prima proposizione di una filosofia idealistica della storia,* "Studi Urbinati", 1/1985, 31-66 and 50-51.

[26] G. W. Leibniz, *The Monadology, Philosophical Essays,* trans. by R. Ariew and D. Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett Publish. Co., 1989), §§ 29-30, § 2.

[27] Ibid., §§ 77-78, § 83.

freedom, into which man is consciously thrown (HKA I, 93-94). This is Kant's most important influence on Schelling's interpretation of myth. The progress of reason can only take place through the realization of the ends of the pure practical reason. This is the prelude to the advent of a new happy era in which, thanks to the ratio, there will be a comprehension of the principles of truth and goodness in their absoluteness, of the foundations of the speculative and empirical sciences of the ultimate ends of mankind. Philosophy has the duty to recall truth from heaven to earth, and to realize this truth in the actual concreteness of the world.

Schelling, in the conclusive part of his dissertation, also envisages his future philosophical strategies. Schelling does not recall nostalgically the transcendent side of the opposition: he knows that it is impossible to go back to the initial era, even though it is possible and necessary to follow the tortuous paths of reason (the privileged scenario of history after the fall) in order to realize the ideal of what has been lost. Man lives the persistence of the original conflict, hindered in his way to his realization under the dominion of reason by a sensibility adverse to the spontaneity of the intellect. This is the ultimate sense of Schelling's scholastic thesis: within the limited horizon of the world the absolute self-adherence and the immediate sensibility do not exist; the damage provoked by the fall results in the inevitability of mediation and the exhausting tension towards realization. This realization cannot be accomplished by pure sensibility, but only by the faculty that directs the eyes upon the realization of an infinite through the finite in life and in thought, whose principle is the infinite progress of reason in time. The overall picture of this first moment of Schelling's thought consists in a final ransom of the world of experience. This ransom can be accomplished only in the radical mode of philosophical speculation.

2. Kant's Position on the Problem.

Among the many authors in Schelling's dissertation on the origin of evil, Kant's name, with Herder's is the first one. In his first note Schelling reveals that he read and was influenced by Kant's essay on radical evil published in the April of 1792 on the pages of the "Berlinische Monatschrift"[28].

[28] *Über das radikale Böse in der menschichen Natur,* I. Kant, *Werke in zehn Bänden,* hrsg. v. W. Weischedel (Darmastadt: WBG, 1983), Bd. 7, 665-705; *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and other Writings,* Part. I, *On the Radical Evil in Human Nature,* ed. by A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Schelling quotes this essay twice: HKA I, 63 and 78. See. M. Brecht, *Die Anfänge der idealistischen Philosophie und die Rezeption Kants in Tübingen,* op. cit.

According to Kant, man's nature is generally the subjective fundament (not perceivable with the senses) of the use of one's own freedom. In this way good or evil –that Kant considers as a *factum*– do not concern the object of an inclination, but a rule that can be followed or violated, that stands upon an impenetrable (and subjective) original fundament of the adoption of the maxims (*Radical Evil,* 667-668). Man is free to choose and to follow or not follow these maxims using his free will. Free will itself follows a tendency *(Hange)* based upon the subjective fundament of an habitual desire that, in the case of moral evil, is the subjective disposition to the "deviation of the maxims of moral law (*Radical Evil,* 676). Kant calls this tendency towards evil *peccatum originalium.* The evil man is he who consciously and voluntarily violates the moral law. This tendency is natural: it stems from the subjective fundament of the possibility of the use of freedom.

Radical evil is implicit in the nature of man, and it's caused by the satisfaction of the sensible inclinations, i.e. by man's choice to subordinate the moral law to the maxims of his self-love. Man bears witness, through his own choice, to radical evil: following his sensible inclinations he corrupts the fundament of all the maxims. But to testify evil doesn't mean to be absolutely evil, without the possibility to change one's own tendency. "for no reason in the world [man] can cease to be an individual that acts freely", and therefore in him there must be the tendency to improve, even though his radical condition seems to be that of a being fallen into evil from a state of original innocence (*Radical Evil,* 690-691). On the brink of discussing the origin of evil in human nature Kant reads the book of Genesis (I-III). His interpretation sees the rational origin of evil (and not the temporal origin, which is the object of metaphysical theology) moving from the state of lost innocence of the myth of Genesis. The detachment from this condition is the result of man's tendency to adopt, as a fundament of his existence in the garden of Eden, the impulses that are extraneous to God's moral law. Once again it is self-love, along with the prevailing sensible impulses (*Genesis,* 3:6), that moves the fallen man's action. Kant says something that will be amply utilized by Schelling, i.e. that if we were able to explain the temporal origin of radical evil, going back to the edenic state, then "we should seek the causes of every premeditated transgression in *a period before our life, when the use of reason was not yet developed in ourselves*".

It must be said that in another writing, that Schelling also knew, Kant already studied the Book of Genesis, formulating a series of conjectures on the edenic and post-edenic human condition. In his *Muthmaßliche Anfang*

der Menschengeschichte[29]*,* Kant pointed out the progressive awakening of reason, with the aid of sight, once man began the detachement from his primitive condition. The emancipation process from nature is man's exit from his childish state, from the garden of Eden to a state of freedom (*Muth. Anfang,* 91-93). Man cannot go back to the primitive state of pure nature ("*von Dichtern so gepriesenen goldenen Zeitalterns*") because he is an end of nature, and therefore he must produce the history of freedom through reason "that pushes irresistibly to the development of the capabilities for which he is born, and doesn't allow him to go back to that state of wilderness and simplicity from which it has drawn him" (*Genesis,* 2:24)" (*Muth. Anfang,* 92). Even though there's no comprehensible fundament from which moral evil could have come to us for the first time, nonetheless the tendency towards evil shows the radical character of human nature and its finitude, which is always open, however, to the possibility to improve its condition, on the "supreme inner fundament of the adoption of all the maxims in conformity with moral law" *(Das neue Herz)*[30]. It must be underlined that Kant doesn't use finitude as a justification of the origin of evil. Finitude must be linked to the tendency to the abysmal subjective principle, a subversion that must be imputed to man, as a voluntary tendency not to conform to the ultimate ends of reason (the unconditioned); this is necessary if we don't want to relegate evil in the sphere of God's unknowable mind, leading to the miscarriage of all philosophical trials in theodicy. There is also an ontological aspect: man cannot fully comprehend the concept of harmonious unity of artistic wisdom and divine wisdom, that would explain the supersensible fundament of the sensible. From this point of view, man is limited[31].

[29] *Muthmaßliche Anfang der Menschengeschichte,* I. Kant, *Werke in zehn Bänden,* op. cit. Bd. 9, 85-102.

[30] "The term radical reveals a neo-platonic and neo-Augustinian tradition –but we mustn't forget Leibniz and the subsequent school Radical means limitatio [...] Radical is, as it is in Leibniz, the original finitude of the creature". A. Philonenko, *L'oeuvre de Kant,* I-II (Paris: Vrin, 1988), II, 226-22.

[31] See I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft,* in *Werke in zehn Bänden,* op. cit., Bd. 8, § 84; *Critique of Judgement,* trans. by W.S. Pluhar (Indianapolis; Hackett Publish. Co., 1987). Kant also writes: "for in the arrangement of this world we have the concept of an artistic wisdom – a concept which, in order to attain to a psycho-theology, is not wanting in objective reality for our speculative faculty of reason. And we also have in the moral idea of our own practical reason a concept of a moral wisdom which could have been implanted in a world in general by a most perfect creator. But of the unity in the agreement in a sensible world between that artistic and moral wisdom we have no concept; nor we can ever hope to attain one. For to be a creature and, as a natural being, merely the result of the will of the creator; yet to be capable of responsibility as a freely acting being (one which has a will

It's quite evident that, according to Kant, the separation takes place and remains within the fall and within life, i.e. within human nature, and that separation constitutes its essence; this happens before the condition in which reason rules, and remains beyond the realm of reason itself. The separation is the result of the conflicting duplicity of the faculties of sensibility and reason (which is also object of criticism in the moral ambit). Kant says that if we could comprehend what happened in the pre-rational era, we would see man as if under the dominion of sensibility, and we would not go beyond an analogical conjecture. Kant didn't go any further in this analogy with the Eden period, but this was enough for the Stift student. Schelling built an interpretation of myth based upon the origin of radical evil, conceived as the initial moment of the separation that originated human finitude. Thisi is the only and inescapable ambit in which is possible to attempt the reunification of what was lost. Unity shall never be understood theoretically: this will remain a decisive fact.

3. Hölderlin: from the Origin of Separation...

I have already mentioned the *Specimina* discussed by Hölderlin in 1790 at the end of the biennium in philosophy with a commission with Bök and Schnurrer[32]. Hölderlin was Schelling's closest companion, not only on a

independent of external influence and possibility opposed to the latter in a variety of ways); [...] this is a combination of concepts which we must indeed think together in the idea of a world and of a highest good, but which it can be intuited only by one who penetrates to the cognition of the supersensible (intelligible) world and sees the manner in which this grounds the sensible world. The proof of the world-author's moral wisdom in the sensible world can be founded only on this insight –for the sensible world presents but the appearance of that other [intelligible] world– and that is an insight to which no mortal can attain". *Über das Misslingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee, Werke in zehn Bänden,* op. cit., Bd. 9, 115: *On the Miscarriage of all Philosophical Trials in Theodicy, Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and other Writings,* op. cit., 23-24. After Kant the idealistic movement tried to work out this unresolved point, that according to Kant couldn't be resolved theoretically. See also the concept of extension of Pure Reason in the practical ambit: *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, Werke in zehn Bänden,* op. cit., Bd. 6, 266-275; *Critique of Practical Reason,* trans. by L. White Beck (New York, NY-London: MacMillan Publish. Co., 1988).

[32] For a comprehensive description of Hölderlin's studies in Tübingen see the classical study written by W. Betzendörfer, *Hölderlin Studienjahre im Tübinger Stift* (Heilbronn: Salzer, 1922); see also Th. Häring, *Hegel. Sein wollen und sein Werk* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1929); R. Schneider, *Schellings und Hegels schwäbische Geistesahmen* (Würzburg, Triltsch, 1938) C. Lacorte, *Il primo Hegel,* op.cit., M. Brecht, *Hölderlin und das Tübinger Stift 1788-1793,* "Hölderlin Jahrbuch", 1973-1974 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974), 20-48; D. Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein,* op. cit.; J. Kreuzer, *Hölderlin im Gespräch mit Hegel und*

personal level, but also on the theoretical level[33]. In his juvenile writings Hölderlin questions the theme of the original separation *(Ur-Teilung).* The general afflatus that generates the problem is dominated by the communion of *Trennung* and *Erwartung,* the dawning of the decisive phase of the future *Vereinigung,* the organic union of the categories of spiritual humanity and individuality, community and individual. We are within the ambit of Kant's history of humanity. This conceptual triptych is clear if we analyze some writings from 1790 to 1795, in the same years of Schelling's Tübingen dissertations. The dissertation of 1790 on the *Parallel between the Salomon's "Proverbs" and Hesiod's " Works and Days"*[34] begins affirming that the aesthetic value of these works is coordinated to their philosophical content. When truth is revealed through mythical figurations there can't be any separation between the form *(Form)* of the poem and its content *(Stoff).* Myth dresses in sensible robes the philosophical content, that would have otherwise remained hidden. This "aesthesiologic" strength of the mythical configuration is its content of truth, showing how in the process of the formation of myth, form and content are inseparable and united: one cannot be without the other.

The origin of evil, according to Hesiod, is the passage from a golden age to an age of pain and anguish. Everything is provoked by Pandora's action, the gods' gift for the men of that golden race. It was the most ill-fated gift of all. The common descent of gods and men is divided into two different destinies[35]. The fate of man is characterized by evil and pain, by the loss of

Schelling, "Hölderlin Jahrbuch", op. cit., 51-72; M. Franz, *Schelling und Hölderlin, –ihre schweierige Freundschaft und der Unterschied ihrer philosophischen Position um 1796,* "Hölderlin Jahrbuch", op. cit, 75-98.

[33] Adorno described in very clear terms the communion of the young Stift students: "Although Hölderlin cannot be dissolved into relationships within the so-called intellectual history, nor the substance of his work naively reduced to philosophical ideas, still he cannot be removed from the collective contexts in which his work took shape and of which he partakes, down to the linguistic cells. Neither the German Idealist movement nor any explicitly philosophical movement is a narrowly conceptual phenomenon: rather, it represents an "attitude of consciousness to objectivity"; fundamental experiences press for expression in the medium of thought. It is those, and not merely the conceptual apparatus and technical terms, that Hölderlin shares with his friends". Th W. Adorno, *Parataxis. Zur später Lyrik Hölderlins, Gesammelte Schriften,* Bd. II, *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974); *Parataxis. On Hölderlin's Late Poetry, Notes and Literature,* II, trans. by S. Weber Nicholsen, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992, 120-121.

[34] F. Hölderlin, *Parallele zwischen Salomons Sprüchworten und Hesiods Werken und Tagen,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op.cit., Bd. 4.1.

[35] Hesiod, *Works and Days,* trans. by D. W. Tandy and W. C. Neale (Berkeley-Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), vv. 6-14.

innocence provoked by the necessity to face the needs created by the dispersion of the content of Pandora's box. Men have lost their gods, and only by becoming like them, they can reestablish an harmony that will mend the break between the prodigious past and the immanent present. The lost gods must be regained, harmony and peace must be reestablished: our destiny must be joined again with the gods' destiny, and only beauty and love can achieve this goal.

There is a passage in the dissertation in which Hesiod's and Salomon's poems are analyzed from the point of view of their form and content. These poems are an expression of the sublime because they are linguistic configurations of what "is for us incommensurable, or that whose limit the contemplating soul doesn't have any evident representation"[36]. The mythical and allegorical expression is a sign of *poiesis* that can be accomplished only through the brief and concise form of myth. This form is deprived of every conceptual instance, that finds no room in this in the poetic "sensibilization" of the original content. Brevity and sublimity are the characteristics of mythical poetry: they allow the expression of the abstract concepts – what Hölderlin calls the moral doctrine of the authors – and to find their personification *(Personificazion).* There's no other way: the concepts would otherwise remain unexpressed, shadowed by the darkness of the undetermined and by the inaccessibility of mystery. The concepts can be clarified and pointed out through the poet's work, that transfigures them through feeling and desire, and presents them as an exemplary sensible expression in a representation of totality *(Total-Vorstellung).* Hölderlin repeats that this moral doctrine has the highest value for the simple and uncultured people for whom the poems were written. Their only possibility of expression is the sensibility of myth, the only medium that personifies these concepts. Myth is, in other words, a bridge that allows the passage and the connection between a lost unity –the unity of destinies of gods and men– and the necessity to provide a representative vision of the ongoing separation. The history of the world begins with this initial action, that depicts the harmony of a society measured on nature. Hölderlin will then invoke, in a Greek-Jacobin fashion, the realization of the conciliation as an ideal incarnation of the republican and post-revolutionary age[37].

The young student, in a not-so-well articulated passage, also provides a definition of the moral doctrine. It's a "moral of the senses *(sinnlich),* popular and non-methodic". It's a moral that defines and corrects ancient

[36] F. Hölderlin, *Parallele,* op. cit, 182.

[37] G. Lukács, in his 1934 essay *Hölderlin's Hyperion,* found Rousseau's and Robespierre's influences in Hölderlin's worshipping attitude for Greek civilization.

elementary values of social distinction (such as wealth and honor) that permeate a naïve and sensuous culture without the universal guide of the intellect *(Verstand),* the only thing that can press on towards a perfected and accomplished moral[38] . In this way a systematic doctrine of moral life is impossible. Those young peoples didn't have any other way to comprehend the values of their existence and of the historical world to which they belonged, but to tell the story of events and figures of that scene through the mythological form. The poet is the one who had to carry out this task.

But the age of the poets and of the creators of mythology is not only distant, in Hesiod's and Salomon's times: this age is also the age of the advent of a "new mythology" of reason, rather than a sensible mythology in which poetry and truth, blended together, form the reality of the ideal world, the guardian of the original fundament and of the destiny and history of the peoples[39]. This is the picture of the *Älteste Systemprogramm* that the three Stift students conceived and wrote together[40]. The program had to be realized through the advent of a mythology presented as sensible religion, a threshold of the analytical reason to cross in the direction of intuition against concept. A mythology stemming from a pre-conceptual and pre-rational ambit in order to make the intuition of the unity of knowledge and life conscious and universally communicable. Mythology shall be the medication of the pathologies of rationality, and an instrument of the

[38] F. Hölderlin, *Parallele,* op. cit, 185.

[39] A. Pellegrini, *Hölderlin e Diotima, Studi di varia umanità in onore di Francesco Flora* (Milano, 1963), 225-235. See also, more recently, M. Frank, *Der kommende Gott. Vorlesungen über die neue Mythologie* (Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1982) and M. Frank, *Mitologie della ragione. Due secoli di critica della razionalità e la nostalgia di una "Nuova Mitologia",* in *Mitologie della ragione,* op. cit., 3-29.

[40] For the controversy concerning the text see: *Das älteste Systemprogramm. Studien zur Frühgeschichte des deutschen Idealismus,* hrsg. R. Bubner, "Hegel-Studien Beiheft", 9/1973. W. Bohem, *Hölderlin als Verfasser des Älteste Systemprogramms des deutschen Idealismus,* "Deutsche Viertelahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte", 1926, 339-426. F. P. Hansen, *Das älteste systemporgramm des deutschen Idealismus. Rezeptiongeschichte und interpretation* (Berlin-New York, NY: De Gruyter, 1989). C. Jamme-H. Schneider, *Myhtologie der Vernunft. Hegels "Älteste Systemprogramms des deutschen Idealismus",* (Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1984). O. Pöggeler, *Hegel, der Verfasser des älteste Systemprogramms des deutschen Idealismus, "* Hegel-Studien" 4/1969. 17-32. L. Strauss, *Hölderlins Anteil an Schelling Systeprogramm,* "Deutsche Viertelahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte", 1927, 679-734. M. Franz, *Hölderlin und das "Älteste Systemprogramms des deutschen Idealismus",* "Hölderlin-Jahrbuch" (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 1975-1976, 328-357. F. Strack, *Nachtrag zum 'Systemprogramm' und zum Hölderlin Philosophie,* "Hölderlin- Jahrbuch", op. cit., 1978-1979, 67-68.

"sensibilization" of philosophy, allowing the passage from nature to man and vice versa.

Hölderlin, coherently with these principles, ends his paper with a harsh criticism against the dogmatism of the philosophical systems, that, according to him, were completely ineffective, if compared with the mythological tales of antiquity. Hölderlin asks with skepticism: "Can we be proud of our systems?". In fact he sees in them only elements of a hollow logic and deductive formalism and dogmatic presumption. Peter Szondi pointed out that Hölderlin refused Winckelmann's mimetic classicism that was a return to the simple reproduction of models and styles, in order to affirm the formation activity, the instinct that "aims at giving form to what is formless" and that conjugates form and moral content through the construction *(Bildung)* of a new narrative and mythological vision of the visible totality of a historic age[41]. This construction opposes itself to the immediate adherence to nature aiming at favoring life in its way to perfection (making the real ideal) and that follows the original instinct that operates by dividing and blending together, by tying and perfecting what is in nature[42].

If ancient art is not nature in itself, but "the answer to a nature that is not our nature" according to its own principle and instinct, modern art, and the duty of the poet, consists in comprehending the distance separating him from Greece and in affirming its own principle (freedom) as the condition of a new and living representation. With the word "living" Hölderlin wants to turn himself to the "empirical" where the sense of the world can be found. This means *to give form* to something: making the content in its unique truth tangible; thinking action as providing a sense; conceiving the poetical activity as *poiesis,* as a linguistic *téchne* in a new perspective, a new relationship, a new unity, a new destiny. All this, along with the fall of the absolute subject (that was then arising with Fichte) forces the research of the primacy of sense in a completely original direction, if compared to the immediate adhesion to a "wild" and formless nature[43]. The need for a new

[41] P. Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I. Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), XI, XII,. In these chapters Szondi analyzed the content of the letter to Böhlendorff (December the 4th, 1801).

[42] Hölderlin's letter to his brother (June the 4th, 1799), F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 6.1, 326-332.

[43] Adorno's polemic in his Parataxis against Heidegger's interpretation of 1943 *(Andenken, Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1981) concerned the letter to and the general problem of the relation between poetry and philosophy. According to Adorno, Heidegger interprets the nostalgia without taking into account the distance between the destiny of modernity and the destiny of Greece, and the identification of Germany as a "New Greece" is misleading, if viewed in the context of property of the freedom of the poet and of the separation of which Hölderlin was fully aware, with the

mythology that can personify the gods to come and explain the passage to a new unity, stems from these considerations, in which Hölderlin is aware of the limits and of the inadequacy of a general, logical and conceptual consideration and of the traces of a past that is separated indeed by a time distance, but that must be re-actualized through a comprehension of the passage from the age of the senses to the age of reason, from a sensible and happy state to the fall in the condition of need, where there is *the exigency to make spiritually visible the invisible,* beyond any demonstrative "presentification".

This nostalgia for the golden age of the past is a theme that Hölderlin partially draws from Schiller[44]. The nostalgia for the past simplicity is the symptom of the *Trennung:* this is the condition of consciousness that moves inexorably separated from the eternal. At the same time the *Trennung* opens up the space within which consciousness can think about its own foundation and its unification: Being. Hölderlin struggles with this nostalgia, and he never completely abandons the idea that the past humanity, even if fallen, remains an ideal of harmony and peace, that should be reproduced through the values of poetic spirit and faith, that are the exemplar matrixes of the humankind of the future. Hölderlin doesn't undervalue the role of the intellect (within the limits of its action) that must be allowed to focus its attention on the highest moral goals, in order to accompany man in his uninterrupted path of perfection. It's the synthesis of the elements that constitutes the privileged opening for the Geist, for the comprehension of being as revelation of the separation and as the fundament of the expression of separation itself.

majority of the contemporary idealistic and romantic movement. Adorno interprets the last Hölderlin's hymns in the light of an idealism only marginally individualistic, and marked by the dominion of the universal, in which there is a growing importance of the role of the exceeding element: the result is the impossibility of a return to antiquity, or the restoration of a simplicity obscured by the silence of mourning. "His breaking of the symbolic unity of art reminds the falsity of the conciliation of the universal and the particular in the context of what is not reconciled: the classic objectivity, that was also the objectivity of Hegel's objective idealism clings in vain to the bodily proximity of the alienated".

[44] Hölderlin approached Schiller's work through the lessons of a Stift student, C. Ph. Conz, who also had personal relation with Schiller. The Review "Neue Thalia", published by Schiller, was read with great interest by Hölderlin, and after a short time, tanks, to Conz's recommendations, he published on the Review *Fragment von Hyperion.* Hölderlin must have known Schiller's essay on the first human society, and he must have drawn from it the idea that the exit from the instinctual phase allows man to enter the sphere of freedom and morality. The passage from Eden to earth gives man his authentic nobleness, that, according to Schiller, consists in his full deliverance from the pacific and happy nature, and the subsequent development of his moral, political, social and theoretical autonomy.

Schelling, even though he insists on the same problem, trusts in the capabilty of comprehension of philosophy, but he will eventually bestow on art the vision of the absolute from within the separation, integrating some of Hölderlin's elements in his thought. He envisions separation through a condition of happiness that is even more original than the golden vision developed by the Greek civilization. This condition, once lost, can't return to its original splendor, and must be sought in the world that we have. The movement of reunification must begin within *the world as nature* and from its separation to reconstruct, reproduce, recreate the unity of the particular and totality: the reciprocal exchange within the break. We can therefore trace "Jewish" and "Christian" elements in Schelling's beginnings, while the Greek elements will emerge later, while Hölderlin's beginnings are surely "Greek". In Hölderlin's fragments of the years in which he was writing *Hyperion,* there is an expansion of the above-mentioned themes. E.g., in the fragment of 1790 *Communismus der Geister*[45]. In this fragment the nostalgia for the lost greatness of the past, and the painful sentiment of the lost age of the creative spirit emerge in the midst of the *fracture (Kluft),* the "abyss between here and there", between the simple beauty of antiquity ruled by the powerful generative spirit and the present, torn apart between religion and science. This fracture can only be perceived: it's the result of the subtraction of nature that consciousness' open eye deprived of an ultimate word. The fracture shows itself in an enigma. This enigma didn't always exist[46]. The time of the apostles of the *kraftvoller Geist* illuminated the abyss, binding its extremes and uniting the center *(Mittelpunkt)* with what is distant and indistinct *(das Entfernteste).* Hölderlin thinks particularly about John's Gospel, but also the communities of the *Act of the Apostles.* In the present time, in the age of separation, *only form* can provide us a fixed axis "da der Stoff immer etwas Gegebenes ist".

Form was once one thing with the natural organization (*the maximum simplicity,* i.e. beauty), but now it must be gained amidst the fatigues and the needs of life, according to our possibilities. It's not immediate form: it's formation, the *act of forming* (the *maximum formation*) [47]. The fracture must

[45] F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 4.1, 306-309.

[46] "Lothar! Don't you also feel a secret [intimate] pain when the eye of heaven is hidden from nature, and then the vast earth is like an enigma missing the final word". Ibid., 307.

[47] "Two are the ideals of our existence: a state of maximum simplicity, in which our needs, though their simple natural organization, without any intervention from us, are in reciprocal accord between them and with our capacities and with everything that is related to us; and a state of maximum formation, in which, concerning need and capabilities infinitely multiplied and grown, happens the same thing through the organization we can

be overcome with a bridge *(die Brücke)*[48] uniting the past, and distance, with the present, and proximity. Most important of all, the bridge unites the primitive and natural state of simplicity with no consciousness with the state of conscious organization, a fruit of freedom and self-determination, that are the principles upon which lay the foundation of the reconstitution of the unity the determined and totality: *Hen kai Pan*!

The passage does not only unite different ages, but also produces a real formal unity that creates the possibility to think/create poetry –i.e. to compose *(dichten)*– together the conditional and the unconditional. The bridge must be crossed from one end to the other following an "eccentric trajectory that man, in the general and in the particular, accomplishes from a point (a more or less pure simplicity) to the other (a more or less accomplished formation)"[49]. The pathway therefore goes from a moment in which a union of multiplicity (in a theoretical sense) and moral legality in a practical sense) was only possible accidentally, to a subsequent moment, in which this unity shall be pursued as an exigency of reason.

The anarchy of representations that marked the absence of the law in the primitiveness must be once again natural through a new re-appropriation of nature itself. How? Through the law of freedom, the "naturalness of necessity" that is only "the analogue of what is called nature". In other words a "new Nature", a new innocence that surprisingly shows itself "where necessity and freedom, the restricted and the unrestricted, the sensuous and the sacred seem to unite"[50]. This re-appropriation is not accomplished through a process of "subjectification" of the unifying principle. The exigency of reason allows the overcoming of the metaphysical dominion on nature, and the possibility of a new approach within a poetical horizon of comprehension, only if it's thought in its radical immediacy. The law of freedom must be realized. Notwithstanding its risk and its fragilities it must be pursued, building the new *hybris* that realizes the highest formation, and the re-establishment of the lost unity in the separation of the absolute and *from* the absolute. The faculty of desiring and the *Phantasie* depends from this law. The progressive realization of the unrestricted ideal of being in unity and multiplicity, in finite and infinite, seeking, through poetry, the

give to ourselves". Preface to *the "Fragment Thalia of Hyperion",* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 3, 163.

[48] *Communismus der Geister,* op. cit., F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 4.1, 308.

[49] F. Hölderlin, 1946 ff. Bd. 3, Preface to the *"Fragment Thalia of Hyperion",* op. cit., 163.

[50] *Über das Gesetz der Freiheit,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 4.1, 211; *On the Law of Freedom,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* trans. By T. Pfau (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1983), 33.

unity with the whole given by the experience of beauty stems from this law: it is the epiphany of the *Hen kai Pan* and the eternal[51].

4. ...To the Original Separation (Ur-Theilung).

The human condition, whose origin is the primitive detachment from unity, is characterized by suffering and by the need to re-compose the horizon of the lost immediacy. Therefore the problem is: *how do we re-compose unity*? In the *Fragment* published on the "Neue Thalia" in 1794, Hyperion begins from the radical condition of mourning and conflict of our existence. We are therefore aware to live and exist within a separation *(sein in der Trennung da),* a peculiar condition of life and action[52]. The journey from childhood to maturity, from the day of a perfect and integrated childhood to the consciousness of the inevitable caducity of life *(Vergänglickeit)* what can be called Hyperion's "Phenomenology of the Spirit": "the more nature elevates itself above the animal the greater the danger to languish in the region of fugacity". This is the journey that the spirit undertakes in order to resolve the contrast and to reunite the living and poetry[53].

When the inevitable caducity is recognized, there is also the need to shed some light on the enigmatic, essential fracture in man: "We are not made for

[51] *Hermokrates an Cephalus,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 4.1, 213. This epiphany is the resolving moment of the separation within the temporal post-Eden condition: "According to Hölderlin, the contradiction between Eraclitus' flow process and the stability and coherence of the One [...], can be found in pantheism, in the idea of the "Uno-Tutto" ("Unitotality"), and in the contrast between the subjective life and the objective existence of nature, conceived as divine, and is resolved though a new Diothima". A. Pellegrini, *Hölderlin e Diotima, Studi di varia umanità in onore di Francesco Flora,* op. cit., 226.

[52] F. Hölderlin, *Fragment von Hyperion, Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 3, 164. Adorno seems to corroborate this hypothesis, even though he refers these considerations to a later stage of Hölderlin's work: "The experience that what was lost -and what clothed itself in the aura of absolute meaning only as something lost- cannot be restored becomes the sole indicator of what is true and reconciled, of peace as the condition over which myth, that which is old and false, has lost its power". Th. W. Adorno, *Parataxis,* op. cit., 145

[53] For the polemic concerning the term Geist see P. Szondi, *Poetik Geschichtesphilosophie I,* op. cit. Szondi discusses Gadamer's thesis expounded in: *Hölderlin und die Antike, Hölderlin. Gedenkschrift zu seinem 100. Todestag* (Tübingen, 1944). See also F. Beißner, *Hölderlins Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen* (Stuttgart, 1961); M. Mommsen, *Dionysos in der Dichtung Hölderlins mit besonderer Berücksichtgung der "Friedesfeier",* "Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrifft", 13/1963; M. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1981); B. Alleman, *Hölderlin und Heidegger* (Zürich & Freiburg: Atlantis, 1954).

what is particular *(Einzelne),* for what is limited *(Beschränkte).* [...] I'd like to annihilate the fugacity that weighs upon us, and that doesn't care about our sacred Love, and as a person buried alive, my spirit rebels against the darkness in which it's chained"[54]. *Da-seyn* here indicates the condition of being in the midst of contradictions, amidst fracture and conflict, with the exigency to comprehend this radical condition of separation, to re-think the deep root of the fracture, to see it under a new light, to brighten up the sunset of life[55], to represent the superior connection between man and world, re-composing the vital "Unitotality".

At the beginning of the fragment *On Religion,* published in 1796, Hölderlin writes: "You ask me why, even though the people, following their nature, elevate themselves above necessity and thus exist in a more manifold and intimate relation with their world, even though, to the extent that they elevate themselves above physical and moral needs, they always live a -in human terms- higher life, so that between them and their world there will be a higher and more than mechanical *interrelation,* a higher destiny, even though this higher relation be truly the most sacred for them because within it they themselves feel united with their world and everything which they are and possess, you ask me why exactly they represent the relation between them and their world, why they have to form an idea or image of their destiny which, strictly speaking, can neither be properly thought nor does it lie before our senses? You ask me, and I can answer you only so much: that man also elevates himself above need in that he can *remember* his destiny, in that he can and may be grateful for his life, that he also senses more continuously his sustained relation with the element in which he moves, that by elevating himself above necessity in his efficiency and the experience connected to it, he experiences a more infinite and continuous satisfaction than is the satisfaction of basic needs (...)"[56]. This passage synthesizes what Hölderlin symbolizes with Hyperion: the man that can and therefore must choose the absolute in himself, the absolute in the particular, cast in the flow of the becoming, and obliged to follow its destiny. Hyperion follows the

[54] F. Hölderlin, *Fragment von Hyperion,* op. cit., Bd. 3, 171. There is an obvious reference to the platonic myth of the cavern and to the soul's liberation from the obscure yoke, in its path towards the contemplation of the ideas. For a general study on Hölderlin as poet and philosopher see W. Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (Leipzig, 1907, IV).

[55] Ibid., 180-181. "Nonetheless, perfection shall arrive only in the distant land [...]. Here only the crepuscule remains. But in some other place surely for us will dawn the sacred aurora.; I think with elation to that moment; then we shall all be reunited, when everything that is divided shall become One".

[56] F. Hölderlin, *Über Religion, Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd.4.1., 275; *On Religion,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters,* op. cit., 90.

destiny of the absolute from within the earthly world, moved by the sentiment of the supreme connection between him and the world of experience ("the element in which he moves"). It's a comprehension that must find a representation, and that must build an image of what could be expressed neither through a logical and conceptual way of a purely theoretical philosophy, nor through the sole sensible way, as it once was possible in the primitive identification. Hyperion shall comprehend the supreme belonging to the world overcoming the opposition: *thinking* unity within separation and separation within unity, and *thinking himself* as always within the realm of separation, through an aesthetic sense: "In the philosophical letters, I want to discover the principle which explains to me the divisions in which we think and exist, yet which is also capable of dispelling the conflict between subject and object, between our self and the world, yes, also between reason and revelation –theoretically, in intellectual intuition, without our practical reason having to come to our aid. For this we need an aesthetic sense, and I will call my philosophical letters "New Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man". Also, I will move in [this letters] from philosophy to poetry and religion"[57]. Thinking himself within the original separation, Hölderlin says that he has achieved the awareness of being in the world as eternal spirit and as caducity, as soul and body *(Wesen auf der Welt)*[58].

The accomplishment of the supreme comprehension reaches an infinite satisfaction, the result of the momentary detachment from the particularities ("a momentary pause from real life"). It's a comprehension that implies a distance from the world of experience, in view of the immediate intuition of the original detachment: the *eidetic vision* of separation *as such* is the representation of its own distinction from the world, a concrete vision of the spirit that repeats the fulfillment of life in its totality. At the same time this pause, that makes the separation evident, must take place within separation: there's no way to place oneself outside the separation or on one of their two sides. Through this repetition, that goes beyond the distancing from the empirical and natural reality and its conceptualization, but that returns to it in the moment of the genius self-reflection that thinks himself as nature

[57] Letter from Frankfurt (February the 24th, 1795) to I. Niethammer, F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 6.1, 203, F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 131-132. Concerning Hölderlin's relationship with Niethammer on spinozism, see D. Heinrich, *Über Hölderlin philosophische Anfänge,* " Hölderlin-Jahrbuch" op. cit., 1984-1985, 1-28.

[58] See the subsequent letter to Neuffer (June 17960), F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 6.1,213.

itself[59] ("Oh, man is a god when he dreams, a beggar when he thinks")[60], thought reproduces real life and builds a bridge towards "the most infinite connection of life", the absolute enigma of existence as the absolute in life[61]. In other words, life presents an *exceeding element* that cannot be neither totally thought nor conceptualized by the intellect. This exceeding element is the original nexus between what is given and what we are, between the element in which we are and the exigency to go beyond it, between nature as something that stands in opposition, and the desire to be ideally one with nature, overcoming the present fracture in infinite peace of beauty: "the divine unity, being in the authentic meaning of the word, is lost for us, and it had to be lost, so that we could desire it and re-conquer it. We separate ourselves violently from the pacific *Hen kai Pan* of the world in order to re-establish it in ourselves. We are in disagreement with nature, and what once was, there' s no doubt about it, one, now appears as an opposition [...], and dominion and serfdom alternate from both sides. [...] For us, it' s often as if the world is everything and nothing, but also as if we are everything and the world nothing. Hyperion also was torn between these two extremes"[62].

To make *being present as beauty,* is the only way to express this exceeding element, the essential fracture of life, in order to reunite the two extremes, separated by the abyss, and to manifest what, due to the limitation of our "knowledge and action" would otherwise remain invisible. "We wouldn't have any presentiment of that infinite peace, of that being in the authentic meaning of the word, we would not aspire to reunite ourselves

[59] *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland,* in F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 3,9.

[60] "But genius in spirit in that it defines itself as nature through self-reflection [...]. For reconciliation, in which enthrallment to nature comes to an end, is not above nature as something Other pure and simple, which could only be domination of nature once again by virtue of its differentness and would share its course through suppression. What puts an end to the state of nature is mediated with it, not through a third element between them but within nature itself. Genius, which cancels the cycle of domination and nature, is not wholly unlike nature; it has that affinity with it without which, as Plato knew, experience of the Other is not possible". Th.W. Adorno, *Parataxis,* op. cit., 146 and 148.

[61] Yet to the extent that a higher, more infinite relation exists between him an his element in his real life, this [relation] can neither be merely repeated in thought nor merely in memory, for mere thought, however noble, can repeat only the necessary relation [...] those infinite, more than necessary relations of life can be thought, to be sure, but not merely thought; thought does exhaust them, and if there exist higher laws which determine that infinite relation to life, [..] and there must be such laws if that higher relation is not enthusiasm *(Schwärmerei)*–I say: if there are such, then they are insufficient to the extent that they are understood [and] represented only by themselves and not in life".

[62] F. Hölderlin, *Über Religion, Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd.4.1., 276; *On Religion,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 91.

with nature, we wouldn't think, nor act, there wouldn't be nothing of any value [for ourselves], we wouldn't be nothing [for ourselves] if that infinite unification, that being, wasn't already present". Beauty is *the manifestation of being* in the unifying game of sensibility, intellect and reason and it's also the unifying principle of the soul's faculties, that are the result of the fall and of existential limitation. "Reason, one can say, lays the foundation with its principles, the laws of acting and thinking, to the extent that they are merely referred to the universal contradiction within man, namely, to the contradiction between the striving for the absolute and the striving for restriction. However, those principles of reason are themselves founded by reason in that it refers them to the Ideal, to the highest foundation of all; and the "must" which is implicit in all principles of reason is in this manner dependent on (idealistic) Being. Now, if the principles of reason which order that the contradiction of that universal, self-opposed striving be united (according to the ideal of beauty), if these principles are universally enacted in that contradiction, then any resolution of the conflict must have a result, and these results of the universal resolution of the conflict are then the general concepts of understanding, e.g., the concept of substance and accident, of action and reaction, duty and right, etc."[63].

However, before identifying authentic being with beauty, and the consequent arrival in the new kingdom of *Dichtung,* the *Trennung* must be conceived in its co-origin with *Verbindung*. Hölderlin deals with the problem in the most cryptic and subtle text that he ever wrote*: Urtheil und Seyn* (1795). This fragment was written in Jena after the troubled encounter with Fichte's philosophy, that Hölderlin first saw as the liberation from the chains of the Stift, and then as characterized by internal contradictions. Hölderlin, in his letter to Hegel (January the 26th 1795)[64], admitted that he had the impression that Fichte was bowing to a transcendent dogmatism. In the same letter Hölderlin also provides a spinozian reading of Fichte's philosophy: "His absolute "I" (=Spinoza's substance) contains all reality; it is everything, and outside of it there is nothing"[65]. The "I" (or Ego) then

[63] Hölderlin's letter to his brother (June the 2nd, 1796), F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 6.1, 208-209; F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 133-134.

[64] *Urtheil un Sein,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* Bd. 4.1, 216-217. *Judgment and Being,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., op. cit., 37-38. An interesting interpretation can be found in M. Franz, *Hölderlin logik. Zum Grundriß von 'Seyn Urtheil Möglickeit',* "Hölderlin-Jahrbuch", op. cit., 93-124.

[65] F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd, 6.1, 154-156; see also F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 125. Hölderlin confirms this judgment with extreme clarity and lucidity in another letter written to his brother (April the 13th 1795): "[...] the unrestricted activity, infinite in its strive, is necessary in the nature of a conscious being (of an "I", as Fichte calls it), yet the restriction of this activity, too, is necessary for a

assumes the character of absolute "unitotality", that becomes a subject in a self both necessary and a-temporal. The "subjectification" of the Hen kai Pan is lost, and becomes eternal in the idea of God, the hypostasis of the Fichte's transcendental "I". This vertiginous jump into transcendence (of which Fichte is not always completely aware that weakens and breaks the defenses of Kant's "abyss of reason" and Schelling's theory of the "I")[66] is the result of Spinoza's concept of substance, filtered by Herder's deism. Hölderlin, instead, includes in the "unitotality" the living and changing multiplicity of reality. Thus it's evident that Fichte's philosophy of the "I" is mirrored by Spinoza's problematic horizon.

Despite Fichte's criticism of Spinoza's "dogmatism", claiming that his supreme unity is nothing but what he calls consciousness, opposed to the supreme substance including intelligence and extension (J.G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre,* 121-122)[67], the absolutely unconditioned principle of the "I", undoubtedly has some of the characters of Spinoza's concept of substance *(Deus sive Natura).* Nevertheless, in Spinoza's *Ethica More Geometrico Demonstrata* (Part I: De Deo) definition n. 3 ("for substance I mean what is in itself, and is by itself conceived [...] whose concept doesn't need any other concept") is an anticipation of the concept of the absolute *from the point of view of reality.* Also the following propositions (1-8), confirm the definitions 6-8, according to which God is an absolutely infinite *Ens realissimus,* i.e. a substance with an infinite number of attributes.

These propositions confirm the necessary existence of substance and its identity with God, just as being without predicate implies the absoluteness of the form of existence of the ego from the point of view of the ego itself (B.

conscious being, for if the activity were not restricted, not imperfect, this activity would be everything and nothing would exist outside of it; if, then our activity did not suffer any resistance from outside, nothing would exist outside us, we would not know of anything, we would have no consciousness; if nothing was opposed to us, there would be no object; yet as necessary as the restriction, the resistance and the suffering effected by resistance are for consciousness, so necessary is the striving for the infinite, an activity, infinite in its drive, within the being which has consciousness; for if we did not strive to be infinite, free of all barriers, we would not feel either that something was opposed to this striving, hence we once again would not feel anything different from ourselves, we would not know anything, we would not have a consciousness". Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 6.1, 164; see also F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 129.

[66] See X. Tilliette, *Il Cristo dei non-credenti e altri saggi di filosofia cristiana,* edited by G. Lorizio (Roma: Casa Editrice Ave, 1994), 58-80.

[67] *Fichtes Werke,* hrsg. v. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), Bd. I, Zur theoretischen Philosophie, 83-328.

de Spinoza, *Ethica More Geometrico Demonstrata,* 37-45)[68]. Fichte's "I" doesn't resembles Spinoza's substance because it's the creator of reality. The "I" doesn't create the "Non-I", that becomes the passage between imagination and intellect. Also Spinoza's God is not a creator, because he exists necessarily, as a substance with infinite attributes, as the condition of every determination. Now, if we conceive positing reality as positing the object, we see that this activity consists in excluding something by the finite "I". (Fichte, *Grundlage,* 193 and 268) that presupposes a separation from the absolute "I" from itself, i.e. taking something away from the absolute totality of reality that the "I" itself is, in the act of its self-determination and establishing the relations between all the determinations. Fichte's substance is the totality of these relations in its omni-comprehension. The absolute self-positing of the "I" and God's necessary existence coincide in the totality of what is set as necessity and as the totality of the substance's relations, even if they cannot be represented, *as such,* by a finite consciousness (Ibid, 253). In Hölderlin's thought, the opposition between the "I" and "Non-I" (ego and non-ego) is the opposition between nature and freedom. Nature is the limit that the free "I" sets to itself. It is a limit that can be transcended through free will and action, and through the capability to articulate and mold nature.

Nature however, is not mere passivity; the reciprocal *actio* and *passio* taking place in the relation between nature and the "I", allows nature to act on the free "I", in the strife towards a new "Unitotality" of man and nature. In his letter to Hegel, Hölderlin writes: α) if the absolute "I" is all reality with no possible objectivity, then this "I" cant' be conscious, and therefore it's nothing: a consciousness without object is unthinkable; β) if I'm limited, therefore I am not an absolute "I". If I am an absolute "I", I mustn't have a consciousness. Thus I'm either nothing or the absolute "I" is nothing for me, and therefore it's *nothing* in a general sense. The question is the following: if I am the absolute "I" then I can place myself from God's point of view and comprehend in myself the entire reality. In order to understand this question Hölderlin thinks that besides the "I"'s identity (and its self-regarding activity), there must be an original separation that must be conceived beginning from the separation itself, and not beginning with the "I" as the absolute principle of knowledge. In so doing, the "I" is placed within a further unity relation that is the measure of the reciprocity of the extremes and of the exceeding unconditional. The "I" identity is not an absolute

[68] B. Spinoza, *Opera,* recognoverunt J. vam Vloten et J. P. N. Land, tomus primus (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1890), 35-266.

principle, but the result of an experience in which the "I" receives its measure and limit by something transcendent[69].

In the fragment *Urtheil und Seyn* Hölderlin thinks that the articulation of difference begins with judgment, as the original division *(Ur-Theilung)* that make subject and object, subjectivity and objectivity possible. This perspective goes beyond Kant's opposition between universal and particular, that maintains a purely logical validity[70]. The *Theilung* of the *Ur-Theilung* necessarily presupposes the concept of the reciprocal relation of subject and object in which the Object becomes for the subject a *Gegen-stand,* something *Widerstand.* The concept of partition also presupposes the whole *(das Ganze),* the original panic moment, containing in an immediate unity subject and object before their separation. There are two preconditions for the *Ur-Theilung:* 1) the reciprocal relation of opposition; 2) the whole as unity of the opposites *(coincidentia oppositorum).* Subject and object aren't the direct preconditions of the partition, but the *consequence* of the supreme unity of opposition and the whole, relation and totality, separation and unity: this supreme unity is the form that being takes when manifested in its initial unity. Partition and wholeness are reciprocal, and co-original with the *Ur-Theilung*.

The fundamental sentence *"Ich bin Ich",* is only the *example* of the concept of theoretical *Ur-Theilung,* while the proposition of the opposition of the *Nichtich* is the *example* of the concept of practical *Ur-Theilung.* In order to think the original separation with the absolute unity an intellectual intuition of *absolute being* is necessary: there is no judgment nor

[69] See C. Jamme, *Hegel e Hölderlin,* op. cit.: "The two friends [Hegel and Hölderlin] agree in the criticism of Fichte's thought, as a reflection that fixes and divides: Fichte could reach to the idea of a unity not any further deductible only in the concept of the "I" as an immediately active relation to itself. The "I" can realize the act of positing itself only as an opposition; but there is a quest for a unity where there is no act of positing. There's the quest for the "One Being" (in Spinoza's sense), for the atesis (Sinclair). Only aesthetics, the experience of beauty, or religion allow the approach to this atetic unity, to this transcendental fundament that makes the self-relation as such possible". The debate on Spinoza's philosophy arose with the publication of F. H. Jacobi's text, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelsshon,* F. H. Jacobi, *Werke,* Bd. 4, 1 (Lepizig: Fleischer, 1785).

[70] "The possibility of the a priori synthetic judgments signifies the possibility of this original connection of every particular, in such a way that since the very beginning, this particular is conform to the logical form of the totality of experience and showing the legality of this totality, as the condition of every particular knowledge. [...]. According to Kant [...] the point is not that the particular derives from the universal, but that the particular is latent an ideal relation with something universally valid and necessary, that is developed and conceptually expressed by critical philosophy". E. Cassirer, *Hölderlin und der deutsche Idealismus, Idee und Gestalt* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1994), 141-142.

conceptualization that can comprehend the *Seyn.* Hölderlin doesn't think that being is the identity of the "I"/subject and the "I"/object ("*Ich bin Ich*"), nor an unthinkable transcendence. Hölderlin conceives being as *Hen kai Pan,* that can be grasped by going through the separation of the sensible multiplicity divided from unity, and with the non-reflective consciousness that instantly knows the whole, the dawning moment of the unity of man and nature. It is therefore necessary to feel at the same time our condition of bond with everything that lives (and that is transitory and finite) and the intuition the instantaneous beginning in which unity and separation were united.

Thus, being cannot be the object of a subjective, intellectual and discursive knowledge. Being transcends subjectivity in its constitution and objectivity in its position. Being opens the ambit of the possibility of relation while playing the role of reality/background, remaining in that exceeding position that must be comprehended within the unity/difference of unconditioned and conditioned[71].

Being is the paradox (a unity of unity and separation) in which the opposites are connected in the depth of an intimacy in which spirit and nature belong one to each other in the difference of organic and aorgic. On one hand there's the organic man, civilizing nature through the formal and formative impulse of the poetic poiesis. On the other hand nature is aorgic, unlimited, accomplished. Through this reciprocal tension, man becomes harmoniously aorgic, universal and pure, while nature becomes organic, an object for contemplation after the struggle between the opposites[72]. Being is the manifestation and the event of the reciprocal relation of subject and

[71] "Being, in its preliminary simplicity to every position, to every opposition and to every synthesis, cannot become the object of a knowledge within the horizon of subjectivity, not more than it allows itself to be deduced or founded by the "I" reflection. Being in its simplicity is what opens up the space of every possibility of the self-positioning of the ego; this possibility can take place only within this space, thanks to the meditation of an object [...]. Thus the only possibility that we have to have access to being, as trans-reflective unity is the correlative opening of the spirit, that answers the opening of the ontological horizon: this opening is called by Hölderlin intellectual intuition". J.-F. Courtine, *Extase de la Raison* (Paris: Galiée, 1990), 40. On Hölderlin's concept of intellectual intuition see X. Tilliette, *Intuition schellinghienne et vision plotinienne,* "Diotima", 6/166-177; X. Tilliette, *L'intuition intellectuelle de Kant à Hegel,* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 71-85.

[72] This complex process will be developed by Hölderlin in the fragments *Grund zum Empedokles and Über die Verfahrungsweise des poëtischen Geistes,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd, 4.1, 241-265; *The Ground for Empedocles and On the Operations of the Poetic Spirit,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 50-82. For the concept on Innigkeit see M. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1981).

object, that become what they are only because something is over them and gives them life thanks to an *ursprünglische Einigkeit* that we can find and re-compose in tragic poetry. Being "[...] must be founded on a intellectual intuition which cannot be any other than that unity with everything living which, to be sure, is not felt by the limited soul, only anticipated in its [the soul's] highest aspiration, yet which can be recognized by the spirit; it results from the impossibility of an absolute separation and individuation and is stated more easily if one says that the true separation, and with it everything truly material [and] perishable and thus, too, the union and with it all that is spiritually permanent, the objective as such and thus also the subjective as such, that they are only a state of the primordially united, a state wherein it exists because it had to transcend itself"[73].

Thus this complete and reciprocal penetration takes place on the level of an exceeding unity and separation, infinite and finite, absolute and contingent. This reciprocal penetration is seen by an intuition that becomes event in poetry, that in a com-position , and artifact of the spirit, a work that represents the hero that carries the weight of nature to which he belongs. The hero shall perish and be born again; he must idealize the dissolution in order to comprehend what is the incomprehensible aspect of dissolution: the possible becomes effectual reality, and effectual reality becomes ideal[74].

Tragedy expresses the paradox at the very foundation of life, in its separation and unity. Tragedy is the passage from *Hyperion* to *Empedocles.* Tragedy is the *mise in scène* of the paradox in which the original mustn't appear in its strength, but in its weakness. The mysterious *Urgrund* of nature ("Unitotality"), can be represented only in the weakness of the original, in the sign that allows its appearance. The light of life *(Lebenslicht)* illuminates what would otherwise remain unexpressed, i.e. the insignificant (=0) that allows nature to become visible, reciprocally rooting separation and *Verbindung.* The results is somewhat "Empedoclian"; it tells us man is mortal, and struggling with nature. The return to a pure life *(reinen Leben)* is not a dream, but the concrete result of a reconciliation that Empedocles feels on the background of the unresolved contradiction between man and nature. The reconciliation is realized through the sentiment of the fulfillment of the unity of aorgic (nature) and organic (man): "only that nature has become more organic through the forming, cultivating man, through the form giving

[73] *Über den Unterschied der Dichtaren* (1800), F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit, Bd, 4.1, 267-268; *On the Difference of Poetic Modes,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 84.

[74] *Das Werden im Vergehen* (1800), F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd, 4.1, 282-287; *Becoming in Dissolution,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 96-100.

drives and forces as such, whereas man has become more aorgic, universal, infinite"[75].

The encounter stems from the sentiment that man (one of the extremes of the opposition –particular existence, spiritually alive, forming individuality), feels when he encounters the other extreme of the opposition (the universal, unconceivable and imperceptible). This encounter, in the form of struggle, is a harmonic paradox, in which conceptuality, and sensibility/intuition meet, and melt one into each other and "in that the particular at its extreme must increasingly and actively universalize itself against the extreme of the aorgic [...] whereas the aorgic must increasingly concentrate against the extreme of the particular and must gain a center and become the most particular". This paradoxical and supreme reconciliation (which is the highest form of paradox) brings back to memory the previous relation *(vormalige Verhältnis),* pure life before the opposition, the unity of art and life made of purity and immediacy, sublime states that now, in the actual separation, can be reproduced only within a *Innigkeit* that is universal, immense, ungraspable and, at the same time particular, determined, real and paradoxical.

NOTE

In a writing by Isaak von Sinclair *(Aus Philosophischen Aufzeichnungen,* 1796*),* a friend of Hölderlin in Tübingen,[76] there is a clarification of the effect that the speculation concerning unity and difference had on the philosophical thought of that period.

Sinclair says that the original condition presented itself in the form of *Athesis,* a unity preceding the separation. The condition of *Athesis* is Hölderlin's being. From its division stem two unilateral points of view (the empirical determinations). Philosophy must begin with the condition of separation in which subject and object are *as such.* This is the condition of partition, as Hölderlin would say, identifying philosophy with the capabilty of judgment *(Ur-Theilung).* The formation of the particular points of view

[75] *Grund zum Empedokles,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd, 4.1, 153; *The Ground for Empedocles,* F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory,* op. cit., 53.

[76] For Sinclair's biography and thought see K. Hengsberger, *Isaak von Sinclair, der Freund Hölderlins,* "Germanische Studien", 5/1920; D Henrich, *Konstellationen,* op. cit., 47-80; J. D'Hont, *Hegel secret,* Paris, 1968); R. Bodei, *Politica e tragedia in Hölderlin,* "Rivista di estetica" 14/1969, 382-393; H. Hegel, *Isaak von Sinclair zwischen Fichte, Hölderlin und Hegel,* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1971); R. Bodei, *Un documento sulle origini dell'idealismo. Le "Note filosofiche" di Isaak von Sinclair,* "Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa", 2/1972, 703-734.

gives philosophy the chance to take a position. On one side there's dogmatism, or idealism trusting the capabilities of reflection –i.e. of specific and conceptual knowledge in which the subjective part turns nature in an object of its own multiplicity (mechanism). On the other side there's the superior realism of *Athesis* negating the separation affirming the reality of "Unitotality". These two points of view are both metaphysical. According to Sinclair any viewpoint would be one of nostalgic, delusional and skeptical people.

The lost unity cannot be simply affirmed from one of these approaches, but it must be understood through their entanglement; through a *transcendental reflection beyond divisions and separations,* reaching the manifestation of the *Hen kai Pan.* The intellectual intuition of an aesthetics, conceived tout court as a philosophy, makes this supreme approach visible. In other words, "Unitotality" cannot be understood by an "I" that simply sets itself as conscious and as the fundament of a theoretical knowledge. This "I" must presuppose a unity (being) that can be shown only from an *aesthetic point of view,* reconciling the reciprocal actions of subject and object, of reflection and phenomenon, of freedom and non-freedom, in the direction of the infinite overcoming of the antithesis between form and content. This is possible only through an aesthetical and transcendental reflection capable of going through, with an infinite effort, the independence of "I" and "Non-I", i.e., going beyond idealism and realism.

According to Sinclair, aesthetics *(Aeisthesis)* is capable of thinking nature as a whole and the movements of separation as subject and object. In order to fulfill this goal aesthetics must presuppose an infinite activity, that is the sentiment of unity through separation, and of separation through unity. The sentiment of being as the feeling to be *Hen kai Pan* remaining within the realm of the contingency of inseparable separation.

Chapter 2

SCHELLING'S TIMÆUS

BETWEEN THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE (1794)

The reconstruction of the beginnings of Schelling's philosophy shows that his *Stimmung* is characterized by the hope of a reconciliation between the human and the divine that runs through the history of the western world. The necessity of philosophy is rooted in the *hybris* of the beginning of humanity, and to its feeling of detachment and loss of the divine dimension, of the horizon that reason cannot reach and concept cannot grasp. Within this perspective, opened by the analysis of the Book of Genesis, there is once again a theme of beginning, departure and loss, connected with a re-composition within the realm of the temporal situation of finitude. The manuscript on Plato's *Timæus,* probably written in the beginning of 1794, shows that Schelling is still thinking about the arguments and themes with which he dealt in his commentary on the Book of Genesis[77]. Schelling's encounter with Plato was probably provoked by Hölderlin, for whom Plato was a fundamental author[78].

Schelling's dissertation on the origin of radical evil was a reflection on the problem of the origin of separation; his notes on Plato's *Timæus* are a comment on the "laical genesis" that Plato elaborated following a myth that

[77] Schelling's text has been recently published in Germany from the *Nachtlaß* in Berlin: *Timaeus (1794),* hrsg. v. H. Buchner (Bad-Cannstatt-Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994). references to the text are indicated with 'T' and page number. For information concerning the manuscript, see Hermann Krings' essay in the above mention Edition: *Genesis und Materie: Zur Bedeutung der "Timaeus"– Handschrift für Schellings Naturphilosophie.*

[78] Even though Hölderlin is mainly interested in Plato's concepts of *kalon* and *eros (Phedrus* and *Symposium).* See E. Cassirer, *Hölderlin und der Idealismus,* in *Idee und Gestalt,* (Damrmsadt: WBG, 1995), 119-121.

appears to be common to the most ancient tradition of our civilization. Both Schelling's writings deal with the same radical question: the beginning of time, i.e., the moment of unity/difference and the beginning of the philosophical quest. Schelling begins his analysis *ex abrupto,* with the platonic distinction between what *always is,* and that has no origin, and what always is born and becomes, but that *never is*[79]. The immutable with no origin is understood in its essence (ουσια) by rational thought; irrational sensibility, on the contrary, perceives only the empirical and intuitive aspect of generated reality. The first distinction, adopted by Schelling, is the distinction between generation or production, and eternal and immutable, can be understood through the underlying and implicit project to transform Plato, so to speak, in a Kantian philosopher.

The platonic separation between empirical and essential, generated and eternal, faith and truth, corresponds to the knowledge faculties. The purely intelligible eternal and immutable *ens* (ον) is the object of rational thought; but this ον is only given through what is generated, according to the model of its immutable eternity. The immutable is present only in the becoming. This relation is created by the demiurge that operates according to the dynamics of this relation: the generation of a sensible *Cosmos* according to an eternal model. "Here it is said that the demiurge had before his eyes an ideal in conformity to which he produced the world" (T 24; *Timæus,* 29a). Schelling forces Plato into saying that what is generated, perceptible and knowable through experience is what is visible: "It has come into existence; for it is visible *(sichtbar)* and tangible and possessed of a body" (*Timæus,* 28b-c), while the original matter is invisible *(unsichtbar).* Schelling considers that the sensible world (the generated) is a copy *(Nachbild)* of the original model *(Urbild),* and that therefore the visible is a copy of the invisible.

Schelling's interpretation of the concept of 'copy' conceives the *form* of the sensible world as 'something' heterogeneous to its materiality: the formal is the visible as such, and not as inherent to matter. Form is what gives form to matter in its legality and regularity, i.e., intellect. In other words the form of the world is not originally present within the world itself, but "in something completely different, essentially diverse from matter", something that is not the determined unity of the *ens.* This third element is the intellect that unites matter and form according to its own legality and

[79] *Timaues* (T), trans, by R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA-London: Harvard University Press 1989). In our quotations we follow the indications of Schelling's text, in this case the reference is T23 (*Timaeus* 27 d). See M. Franz, *Die Natur des Geistes. Schellings Interpretation de Platonischen 'Timaios',* "Hölderlin Jahrbuch", op. cit., 237-238

regularity, giving the world "a form that was the copy of an original pure form". The world is visible in its present and existing totality -as cosmos- and its mimetic determinations: the cosmos cannot be simply "what is present", but what, in contemplation, leads to a theoretical science (T 26-27)[80]. Original matter is invisible, and only intellect makes it visible by determining it and placing in the space of visibility given by pure form. The unity of περαζ and απειρον stems from a principle that is, simultaneously, the possibility of the visible and of the formal: it's the *tertium* that guided everything towards order and regularity.

The demiurge didn't create matter or form, but bound them together: he is the maker of the world because he collects and puts together the "pieces" that he finds in the beginning. These "pieces" are the primordial elements that will produce a totality of determinations, organized according to necessity. In order to do this he "took everything that was visible and wasn't still, that moved without discipline and without order: he guided [everything] from disorder to order, thinking that the latter was better than the former. (T 27; *Timæus* 30a). Thus the original matter preexisted the world, and the world is possible thanks to the conjunction of the formal with pure intellect. This original matter dangles ambiguously between being something visible in its chaos, and being something invisible, preexisting every formation; this matter is not simply invisible. The form of pure intellect gives form to this matter and therefore the invisibility of original matter is connected to its understanding by the human intellect: it had to be visible by the divine intellect that give it a regular form according to precise laws. In other words, the original matter is absolutely invisible to the human eye and the human intellect. Human intellect can only can comprehend only what is formed within its determination, for the noetic and dialectic comprehension of reason. This is a step that only the philosopher who goes through the phase of dianoetic thought can make[81].

Schelling seems to be quite ambiguous about this point: he recognizes that Plato considers original matter as something chaotic and visible to the divine intellect (and therefore invisible to the human intellect), but eventually original matter becomes visible to human intellect. Schelling writes: "should the sentence 'that which moves without discipline and order etc.' be only a sensible representation of the absence of regularity *in general (versinnlichte Darstellung der Regellosigkeit überhaupt)*?" (T 27). The

[80] Aristotle analyzes the same problem in his *Metaphysics,* 982 b.

[81] In the *Timaues* we can recognize a doctrine that doesn't question the ultimate origin of matter, or the reason why the demiurge gives life to matter. Plato questions about the human way to conceive what was already conceived in the divine sphere (reminiscence) and the methodology to adopt to reach this unconditioned element.

problem is the following: if original matter is invisible because only what participates of the form of the intellect is visible (the world of physical objects and opinions), why and how it's possible to have a sensible representation of this irregularity and disorder? A possible answer, implicit in Schelling's text, is the hypothesis that the invisible original matter is a visible element without reason and intellect; but this passage, and how is it possible to comprehend the original state of matter and of the divine intellect, must be explained.

The demiurge conjugates the disorderly invisible matter with the formal and pure intellect producing the sensible and empirical world, which has an order and is visible. This visible world, the unity of two invisible elements, is called beautiful (καλον; T 28; *Timæus,* 30b). Beauty *is* only if it is visible: beauty is perfection and regularity, but what is perfect and regular is the απειρον that received form according the best of the possible models, the ideal to which the physical world corresponds. Beauty, being always visible, signals the passage from the original ideal and to sensible reality. Beauty is the ideal becoming concrete, the expression of the movement of formation, and therefore the most evident result of the genesis. Thus this world is the best of possible worlds because it is "the most consistent with itself, and has the maximum consciousness of its own unity, i.e. possesses reason"[82].

Schelling also notes another characteristic of the original matter before the intervention of the divine intellect. The soul is the principle of the rhythmical and orderly movement that binds the chaotic movement within the boundaries of a conformity to precise laws: therefore Schelling deduces that the soul's intervention demonstrates that it's the principle of the original force of the changing world, i.e. of the generated and visible world. The soul is therefore the original invisible present in both the chaotic matter and the formal element of the intellect (T 28-29)[83]. On this platonic basis Schelling shall found his *Naturphilosophie,* in which nature is the cause of the regular order of the world, and an active principle according to ends. Schelling's reconstruction of the platonic text sees the soul, moved by the demiurge to participate to the world, as the link between invisible and visible, the acting and conditioning principle of the passage from disorder to order. The *anima*

[82] H.G. Gadamer, *Ideen und Wirklichkeit in Platos "Timaoios"* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1974), 1-36.

[83] On the soul's role see H.G. Gadamer, *Ideen und Wirklichkeit in Platos "Timaoios"* , op. cit.; the soul is not the cause of the original movement of matter. The soul, being the cause of a circular, rhythmical and orderly movement, is the internal principle of movement of the generated world.

mundi "was scattered all over the universe. He [the demiurge] placed it at the center, from which it was propagated on the whole" (T 41; *Timæus,* 36e)[84].

Schelling also analyzes the distinction between two types of ideas: those that stand at the foundation of the world from the material point of view and those that stands at its foundation from the formal point of view (that cannot be referred to any particular object, such as the ideas of good, of quantity and of quality and causality). The bridge between these two categories of ideas is based on the mimetic relation between the visible and the invisible, i.e. on the fact that the sensible world is founded on the projection of the subjective onto the objective: the visible world is the copy of the invisible because the ideal model is rooted in human subjectivity. In Schelling's words: "Insofar human nature, as it appears to us, is not only a product of our empirical receptivity, but instead a work of our representational faculty *(Vorstellungsvermögen),* insofar the latter contains original, pure forms of nature, founded on itself, *insofar* the world, in representation *(Vorstellung)* belong to a higher faculty than mere sensibility, and nature is represented *(dargestelt)* as a type of superior world, expressing the pure laws of the world. Through the observation of this system of laws prescribed to nature by the pure intellect, we could be led to the idea that the visible world is the type of an invisible world" [...]" (T 31).

Schelling explains that the ideas are not a physically existing invisible, as the original matter: if we do so we would fall into the fancy that believes that the genre is perfectly comprehended by a single species ("the transposition to the super-sensible of the merely sensible"). However, since there are two types of existence (pure existence and physical existence), the ideas, the object of pure thought and expression of pure form of the representational faculty (T 32) have a supersensible existence, i.e. a concept that has no physical meaning, but only a logical meaning (T 43-44). The 'Kantian' demiurge is used by Schelling in order to turn Plato into a "Kantian" philosopher. This architect *forms* and *gives an order* to the world, but he is not a creator: every single being in the world wasn't the work of matter, but an accord of individual pure laws in a unitary whole, i.e. was the work of an idea of a *representation of the accord* of individual pure laws in a unitary whole" (T 33). the 'Kantian' demiurge had to act, in its formation of the world, according to a legality: he thought only what was possible and

[84] Schelling also writes: "Here one doesn't talk at all about making the soul of the world the participant of a substance, but only to make it the participant of the λογισμοζ (faculty of reasoning) (i.e., not of the λογοζ, of the intellect, but of what is produced by the intellect, the form of the intellect) and of harmony των νοητον (the harmony of the intelligibilia), (of a form of the unity peculiar to the intelligible world)", (T42). see C. Cassirer, *Idee un Gestalt,* op. cit., 120.

necessary according to the pure form of the intellect, and according to general concepts exceeding every determined representation. These formal concepts must be properties of the human intellect as well as of the divine intellect. They must be thought also by the human intellect, that is an intellect because it is capable of thinking these *general concepts* in communion with the pure intellect. "The general concepts had to be present in a superior intelligence, because this [intelligence] was the condition of the possibility of the general law, according to which men arrange their empirical researches". (T 35). Without this communion between the divine and human spirit it would not be possible to comprehend the identity of unity an multiplicity in the idea of *nature in general:* the union of an unlimited and unrestricted element (απειρον) and limit (το περαζ), of infinite and finite: "The idea of the conjunction of *unity* and *multiplicity,* or plurality, is an idea absolutely predominant in Plato, and he uses it not only *logically,* but also as the *concept of nature"* (T 36)[85].

Since man shares with the demiurge the formal element of the intellect, the original matter (the informal and chaotic pre-existing matter molded into a determined form) is invisible for the intellect and for the senses; the original matter moves and has its vital principle in a temporal ambit preceding man's activity and faculties. This temporality is united with the absolute formal principle, i.e., existence in general before its actualization, which is the condition of the possibility of determined objects: "Therefore Plato had to assume that to every object corresponds an original idea in the divine intellect, embracing every individual species, and that, since [the idea] did not arise in the divine intellect for the sole abstraction from the single objects, but on the contrary made this operation possible, it could be neither *generated,* nor *destructible,* and absolutely nothing subjected to the form of time" (T 37)[86].

The *foundation of the world* is therefore *one* and *unique* idea in the divine intellect, the general idea of the world as the totality of genres: This is what Plato means with the archetype placed at the foundation of the world.

[85] The main reference to the thesis of the unity of reality is *Philebus,* 15d-16c.

[86] It is important to keep in mind that this problem was studied centuries later by Spinoza, and solved with the identity of God and substance and with the rejection of the dualism between the eternity and origin of God and the eternity and origin of substance. see B. de Spinoza, *Ethica More Geometrico Demonstrata, Opera,* recognoverunt J. van Vloten et J. P. N. Land, tomus primus (Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag, 1890), I def. 6, prop.14. Kant's transformation of the problem, that is a bridge leading to Schelling's developments is already elaborated in the writings: *Meditationes de Igne* (1755); *Versus den Begriff der negativen Grössen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (1763); *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe* (1786).

Properly speaking, it is nothing more than an *idea.* Because only the *idea* of the world is necessarily *only one* [idea]"(T38). To this idea of the world corresponds, as its consequence, the visible world. This is above all the consequence of the formal unity of the representational faculty, which conditions the world in its visible unity: "the world is properly a unity only as a *representation within ourselves*". This world is always a particular and determined world in its partial and subjective visibility, bearing the tension of the objective form of reason that "infallibly aims at the unconditional, for a representation of the whole". In other words, the tension of reason towards the unconditional shows the communion and the participation between the divine intellect and the human intellect, i.e., between the forming intellect (the general idea of a unitary whole, regulated by beauty) and the human intellect, that unifies subjectively the multiplicity generated and re-produced, and that tries to perceive beauty in the visible as visible in connection to the idea of the whole.

The reconstruction of the platonic concept of divination (το μαντειον) is characterized by the idea of the overcoming of the temporal finitude and of the limits of knowledge. Divination is therefore conceived as the faculty of getting empathically and productively in touch with the divine dimension. Through divination the subject removes himself from the rational ambit in order to evoke, with the enthusiasm of inspiration, a reality beyond the reach of the usual instruments of reason. Man, overcoming the limitations of the sensible world becomes as god. The subject of divination is the prophet (προφητης), whose hermeneutical work consists in solving the enigmas and the doubts of the sensible world, reflecting himself in the divine and noetic element. The prophet sees the unconditional within the realm of the conditional, the visible trace reflected by the invisible. The prophet reflects within himself the vision of the origin, and visits the primitive ambit of the demiurge's poietic action. This prophetic faculty is not an irrational inspiration, and it seems to anticipate the concept of intellectual intuition that Schelling will later develop. Besides the simple analytical intellective knowledge, reason must have another instrument.

Eternity and temporality are bound by the same mimetic principle that exists between the pure idea of the world and the generated world. Schelling finds in Plato the classic distinction between eternity and temporality and their mimetic relation ("Time is the image of eternity insofar only trough time the question concerning eternity becomes possible", T 45), but he also introduces Kant's dynamics: "with the word αιων (eternal) Plato indicates nothing else than the pure form of time within ourselves, not yet applied to phenomena" (T 45). Eternity (το αει κατα ταυτα εχον), the pure form "of the whole independent from our intuition", becomes time when applied to the phenomena: the idea of time, that in man is the idea of the pure form of

time, becomes a finite temporal succession in the phenomenon. The Platonic theory of time implies the application and the contact between the ideal and invisible world and the real and visible world; this contact requires a *tertium,* a medium that is the cause of the union of the unlimited elements (απειρα) with the limit (περαζ), as forms of the representational faculty of the intellect. This *tertium* is the intelligent *self-activity (verständige Selbstthätigkeit)* that mediates between the chaotic unrestricted of the original substance and the restricted of the ideal forms, making the phenomenic and temporal world real. This is just another way to say that the visible is determined by the form that "falls" on the in-formed determining it. This is a movement through which blind necessity is dominated by the formal intellect that *persuades it (überreden)* "to form everything that is produced" (T 50).

What about the destiny of the original and chaotic matter, invisible to the human eye, after this process of poietic persuasion? This matter was transformed by the immutable substratum that founds the mutable flux of phenomena. The invisible (the receptacle and the nurture of every becoming (T 53; *Timæus* 49a), is the persistent quid that founds the flux of mutable and visible phenomena. This fundamental substance is empirical and invisible (sensible without sense; T 74); it is not the original forming intellect. This substance "is the substratum of all the diverse forms that arose through the imitation of the pure, intelligible, original forms. Substance itself did not originally participated to this form, and according to its own essence, it wasn't even capable to do such a thing, but [this substance] is only the substratum of all those forms that arose through the imitation of the forms of the intelligible world" (T 54). The intervention of the forming intellect was therefore necessary in order to conjugate the invisible and informal element with the invisible and formal element, and to produce the formal and visible element. This element is sustained by the fundament shared by every concrete realization of the idea. Within this fundament there is an intellect, aimed at a theoretical knowledge which is potentially identical to the divine intellect.

Schelling, following Plato, says that the individual sensible determinations are a copy of the eternal forms is a wonderful fact (T 54; *Timæus* 50c). Schelling's analysis of Plato's text is focused on this wonderful and ineffable element: the contact between the unrestricted eternity and the restricted formal element, between the original model and the imitation, between the undetermined and the determined element. Schelling depicts 'his' Plato in wonderfully synthetic pages: "Plato already said that the elements, insofar as they are visible, should be completely different from the matter that stands at their foundation, and that [the matter] as such, never makes itself visible, and that [the elements] are not, properly

speaking, the matter itself, but forms, determinations of the matter, that matter received from the external. In fact, [the elements] received this form from the divine intellect, and so became visible [...]. Thus matter *(Materie),* since it is constituted by the elements, and since is the ultimate empirical substratum of each of the forms that were produced with the world's creation, cannot be visible, because nothing can become visible for us, except for these forms (imitations, copies of the forms of the pure intellect). Therefore one cannot say that the matter that is the basis of the world is earth, fire, water etc. But only that matter became fiery, watery etc. Because, in a way that is difficult to understand, matter received from the external a determination" (T 56-58).

The basis of the world's reality is the ordering activity of the divine intellect, that forms the objects following an original model, and that molds an original matter. The demiurge gives an order to the elements that are persuaded to comply with this necessity. *Formation* is this communication of determinations, i.e. the process of communion in which the indistinct driving force of the cosmos receive a rational and intelligible soul. To *give form* to something invisible (αορατον τι), making it visible through reception, means that the essence of visibility is the assumption of a form: this wonderful event is beyond the reach of the demonstrative λογοζ. Schelling admits that it is difficult to understand why all this happened, and that this fact is the unsolvable *Aenigma Mundi.* What was originally separated is united by something external in the act of forming the world. The world is the visible expression of two invisible spheres. Within this world it is possible to trace and find the unity of the separated spheres. This is an extremely important and conclusive problem.

The absolutely undetermined *original matter* (απειρον) received its form from the external, and this *general form,* the principle of determination of particular forms, is *unity* or *limit* (περαζ); therefore the object is in itself is something unlimited, and connected to limitation. Plato admits that this coordinated and contemporary duality is the divine gift that allows us to see the unrestricted and invisible and the restricted and visible through the determined *ens.* Thus the whole is seen as undetermined reality (quality) and as the determination of reality (quantity)[87]. Schelling repeats continuously that reality is, properly speaking, invisible, and also that what is invisible is reality *(Realität):* only through quantity this reality becomes the objective

[87] The reference is to *Philebus,* 23 c. See *Axioms of Intuition (quantitas) and Anticipations of Perception (qualitas),* I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Werke in Zehn Banden,* op. cit., Bde 3-4, 203-206. These are the parts of Kant's Critiques that Schelling already knew well when he was interpreting this part of Plato's text.

world of the perceivable phenomena. It is not by chance that this undetermined and unrestricted element is an object of pleasure in the ambit of sensation: this element is an infinite that is immediately present (the pleasure or displeasure of the invisible). Man participates to the universal totality through causality (το τηζ αιτιαζ γενοζ) and communion (το κοινον).

Communion is the concept of the identity of form and content of the real world (T 63). There is a *koinonìa* between form and matter, between the limit (the necessary determination to give sense and image to the ideal) and the unrestricted (the sphere exceeding every articulation, that cannot be exhausted by perceptible image). The fulfilled unity is realized from within and through the ambit of what is visible, permanent, beautiful and excellent: the world. Men philosophize about this gift, subsuming the world under general concepts (περασ, απειρον, κοινον, αιτια); just as the demiurge originally did: "concerning the nexus between these two [form and matter] a cause in relation to the world must be conceived, a cause that ordered everything according those forms, exactly how we must picture a cause for the individual effects *everywhere*" (T 68). What was *immediately* united in the divine mind, is *mediately* united in the human mind: "Clearly both the forms of the restricted and the unrestricted are separated one from the other only in the representational faculty, because outside the representational faculty they exist only in a reciprocal connection" (T 68). This is possible because the forms of the human intellect are subjective in pro of the representation of the generated and empirical world; the action of the divine intellect took place in the immediacy of eternity and in the timeless unity of subjective and objective. Nonetheless there is a trace of this unconditioned unity. The representational intellect reproduces the original separation in its own structure. This structure is a copy of the situation of the beginning, and of the situation of the unrestricted chaotic element (corresponding to the sensible element) and the regulated and restricted element (corresponding to the categories of the intellect). Through this process the intellect represents his unity within the empirical world. Our intellect cannot conceive the original matter before its formation because "we cannot think anything without form". We also can see the pure forms only through their application. The perception of unity must come through the visibility of what was originally invisible: through form i.e., for this 'platonic' Schelling, through experience.

Schelling turned Plato into a Kantian philosopher. Plato can now determine the existence of sensible objects that are not perceivable by sensible intuition: this objects are the absolutely invisible that belong to the knowledge faculty of the intellect (*Timæus,* 51 d-52 a). These are the original intelligible elements of every individual object under which every

individual objects falls. The general form of everything that exists. In other words, these are the ideas in general, the "pure form of the intellect through which the world was ordered". These ideas can be philosophically reached through a criticism of reason. This criticism lays the foundation for the possibility of a unity of experience for a knowledge of the world as a whole and in its determination. This is Schelling's gift to Kant, and the setting up of the problem for the future.

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Chapter 3

THE ESSAY ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A FORM OF ALL PHILOSOPHY (1794)

Schelling, in this period, struggles with the problem of the beginning of the world and knowledge, and with the problem of the relationship between philosophical subjectivity and real objectivity. This is the period in which Schelling encounters Fichte's philosophy. He immediately realized that Fichte's doctrine of science offered him the opportunity to rethink his expectations and his theses with a greater systematic and synthetic coherence. The encounter with the *Wissenschaftslehre* seemed to answer the questions raised by Schelling's early speculations. We shall read Schelling's first systematic writings from this point of view.

In his letter to Hegel (January, the 6th, 1795) Schelling describes Fichte as the only one who could fully grasp the premises of Kant's philosophy and to reach that "land of truth" in which a new philosophical unitary principle seems to dwell. Fichte is therefore a kind of a new Socrates. Schelling also tells Hegel that he had neglected his theological studies in favor of philosophy[88], and that he had the possibility to meet Fiche personally while the philosopher was in Tübingen in May 1794. Schelling writes that he was greatly impressed by Fichte's theses, even though Fichte doesn't mention Schelling in the letter to his wife in which he describes his trip (May the 20th, 1794)[89]. Most likely Schelling heard some conversations or attended

[88] "I don't have much to say about my theological works. Since almost a year ago they became secondary. [...] Presently I live and I move inside philosophy", G.W.F. Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel,* I-III hrsg. v. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburgh, 1952).

[89] This is all but surprising. It would have been very strange if professor Fichte could find a particular interest in Schelling, who to him was only one of the many young students that attended his conference.

the conference in which Fichte expounded his project of a doctrine of science in the writing *Über den Begriff*. This writing had a decisive influence over Schelling' s *Über die Möglickheit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (September 1794)[90]. However, a careful reading of Schelling's text reveals a notable degree of independence from the guidelines of the more mature philosopher from Rammenau. The writing *Über die Möglickheit* is connected with Schelling's early academic writings, dealing with the theological and philosophical problems of the beginning. It also clearly shows Schelling's sudden enlightenment provoked by Fichte's work. The philosophical horizon opened by Fichte provides Schelling with the possibility to broaden and deepen the intuitions of his dissertations: this represents the possibility to find a basis for the construction of the future transcendental idealism. The question about the problem of the beginning becomes the question concerning the possibility of philosophy in general. Schelling's position, however, cannot be identified with Fichte's philosophy and plays a significant role in the contemporary debate involving Reinhold, Schulze and Maimon and Fichte's writings *Über den Begriff* and on the *Aenesidemus*[91].

[90] *Über die Möglickheit einer Form der Philosophie überhaput* in SW I, 85-112. *On the Possibility of a Form of All Philosophy,* (OP). Transl. into English by Fritz Marti, in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge. Four Early Essays* (1794-1796), (London-Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1980). I have translated *Grundsatz* as "fundamental proposition", and I have modified a few details of Marti's praiseworthy translation. About this text in relationship with the early Schelling's philosophy see: J.-Fr. Marquet, *Liberté et existence. Étude sur la formation de la philosophie de Schelling,* (Paris, 1973); W.G. Jacobs, *System und Geschichte. Neueste Forschungerergebnisse zu Schellings frühester Entwicklung,* in "Hegel-Studien", Beiheft 17, 1977, 165-170; H. Holz, *Die Idee der Philosophie bei Schelling. Metaphysische Motive in seiner Frühphilosophie* (München-Freiburg, 1977); M. Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie* (Frankfurt a.M., 1985); A. Petterlini, *Esperienza e ragione nel primo Schelling* (Verona, 1972); A. Massolo, *Il primo Schelling* (Firenze, 1953); F. Moiso, *Vita natura libertà* (Milano, 1990); I. Vecchiotti, *Schelling giovane* (Urbino, 1993); G. V. Di Tommaso, *La via di Schelling al "Sistema dell'idealismo trascendentale"* (Napoli, 1995); ; E. Guglielminetti, *L'altro assoluto* (Milano, 1996); F. Moiso, *Vita natura libertà. Schelling (1795-1809)* (Milano, 1990).

[91] K. L. Reinhold, *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlischen Vorstellunsvermsgens* (Prag und Jena: Widtmann una Mauke, 1789); K. L. Reinhold, *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missvertständnisse der Philosophen* (Jena 1790); G. E. Schulze, *Aenesidemus ober über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Professor Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie. Nebst eine Vertheidigung des Skepticismus gegen die Anmaassungen der Vernuftkritik* (Göttingen, 1792); S. Maimon, *Versuch einer neuer Logik oder Theorie des Denkens. Nebst anghehängten Briefen des philates an Aenesidemus, Gesammelte Werke,* Band V, hrsg. v. V. Verra, (Hildesheim: G. Holms, 1965 ff.); J. G. Fichte, *Recension des Aenesidemus oder über die Fundamente der vom*

In Schelling's view, a philosophy on the fundament on the necessary connection between the absolute and the contingent is possible only through the search of the absolute fundament of philosophy. That is the attempt to think the possibility of the connection within the original separation and the exceeding element of its rational comprehension. This effort takes place within the unrealizable infinite realization of the absolute and the continuous development of man within the limitations and restrictions of the finite. Besides the chimerical attempt of a conjunction to the original unity, one can find the fundamental connection between the unconditional and the conditional, and their presence within the connection itself only through philosophy, representing the radical concreteness of this nexus. Philosophy is the essential tool that man has in order to comprehend the *quid* on which his existence stands and towards which he strives: the absolute-unconditional that through this restricted existence represents the principle of both the form and the content of philosophy, from which every determined knowledge is derived[92].

Schelling expounds the characteristics that this principle should have: it must be a fundamental proposition *(Grundsatz)* unconditioned by any superior proposition, and conditioning the type of unity, i.e. "the unity of a continuous connection of conditional propositions" (SW I, 90; OP 40). This fundamental proposition (unlike the individual sciences, determining their own contents, that in turn are the particular from of every science) must be the condition of the form and of the content of every science. This proposition is the fundamental principle of philosophy (the science in which form and content are necessarily linked), and therefore it must hold a position beyond the original partition between form and content. Philosophy must be founded on a fundamental proposition in which content and form are indissolubly united. The principle of philosophy must be stated absolutely and unconditionally *(schechtin-unbedingt).* Philosophy, the science of the conditions of knowledge, must be founded on a principle

Herrn Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophe, Fichtes Werke, hrsg. v. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971) Bd. I, *Zur theoretischen Philosophie,* 1-25, See also Schelling's letter to Hegel (February the 4th 1795), in G.W.F. Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel,* op. cit., 114.

[92] The term *"Unbedingt"* is usually translated with the word "unconditional". The word *bendingen* indicates the act of determining, conditioning, positing limits, having a presupposition (or a meausure). *"Unbedingt"* can be therefore interpreted as the undetermined, the not-determined, the unmeasured, as the ambit of the *prius* to every determination and as the ambit of the condition of possibility. *"Unbedingt"* as the *absolutum* indicates the *prius* to every determination, free from every limitation and particularity.

superior to philosophy itself (representing its form and content), and nevertheless comprehended within philosophy itself: "it follows that there must be either be one particular exalted science *(erhabne Wissenschaft)* that ranks above philosophy and all other sciences, or else philosophy itself must contain the ultimate conditions of all other sciences. That particular science then could be the science only of the ultimate conditions of philosophy itself and for that reason the question whether philosophy is possible at all places us within the domain of that first science which could be called propaedeutic of philosophy *(Philosophia prima),* or, better still, theory (science) of all science, archscience, or science κατ εξοχην since it is supposed to condition all the other sciences" (SW I, 92; OP 41-42).

Schelling points out the necessity of an *Urwissenschaft* of the absolute of human knowledge in itself, and that this absolute can be achieved only through the radical assumption of an un-eliminable circularity. The note at page 92/41 of Schelling's text states that it is not possible to search for the archetype of human knowledge, but also that this archetype must be presupposed in order to make this search possible. This circularity shows the "given" character of the absolute ("the absolute can be determined [given=geben] only by the absolute. There is an absolute only because there is an absolute (A=A)"); this absolute is expressed within the formal determination of human knowledge. What does it means to say that the absolute must be given? First of all it means that the "giveness" of the absolute is not an objectification: the absolute is not given like an object: it is an *un-be-dingt* and cannot be given like a "thing". The absolute is the ambit of the "being-given" in itself. Schelling defines this general idea of giving as the being posited in itself through itself. Schelling also says that the fundamental proposition must contain in itself the necessary relationship of its form and content. Form and content of the *Grundsatz* must be reciprocally conditioned: "therefore the inner form of the content and the form of the fundamental proposition are each the form of *being conditioned by itself (Bedingtseyn durch sich selbst)* and only through this inner form does the external form, the form of *being posited unconditionally (die Form unbedingten Gesetzseyns)* becomes possible" (SW I, 93; OP 42).

This is the central point of Schelling's writing: the inner form of the *Grundsatz (being conditioned by itself)* conditions and determines its own inner form *(being posited unconditionally),* and therefore every affirmation that has the form of the "being posited" must be *conditioned by something superior.* This supreme principle is the *immediacy* and the *reciprocity* of the relationship between form and content that anticipates and determines every position of the two elements. This is a principle that represents and acts out a tension: it opens itself up keeping itself and remaining within itself. Schelling asks: "How can I posit a content (*inhalt,* therefore not *meaning*) as

different from any other without presupposing the very form of positing, through which every definite content is determined as different from everything else that can be posited?" (SW I, 93; OP 43). This reciprocal immediacy is the ambit of the *being posited in general* that appears through the nexus of reciprocal belonging and origin of what posits and what is posited. This nexus is the *preliminary* ambit of the real separation of form and content. The supreme fundamental proposition *(oberste Grundsatz) presupposes* in itself and shows through itself the totality of form and content *in their difference and unitary reciprocal relationship:* the opening of the possibilities of existence of the being posited in general. In philosophy the principle of the position of the world and the principle of the possibility of knowledge are one and only principle. The opening of the possible is on a higher ground than necessity. The relationship is the excellent modality of what is itself through itself. Thus, that fundamental proposition gives the general form of this connection, the form of reciprocal determination of the content by the form and the form by the content" (SW I, 94-95; OP 43). In its being posited the absolute never appears as the absolute in itself: the absolute gives itself with and through what is not absolute. *The unconditional and the conditional are bound by a reciprocal relationship, and they are brought into being only through this relationship.*

The *reciprocal relationship* between possibility and necessity, the being posited of the absolute and the being posited of the contingent (a relationship that is nothing but the *fracture* between interiority and exteriority, authentic and unauthentic, conditional and unconditional) is what is posited through itself in a radically unconditional way. The absolute is always posited only within the relationship, and never in itself. The absolute can be identified with the relationship. The external form (the element that shows the scission of immediacy) is the inner condition the conditional. Only with these considerations the principle of philosophy has reality *(Realität)* and determination *(Bestimmtheit).* According to Schelling none of the principles established by other philosophies (Spinoza, Descartes, Leibniz) had these two characters. Only this supreme fundamental proposition allows form to have a reality and content to have a determination. This proposition allows the reciprocal foundation of content through form and vice versa.

If we consider again Schelling's comment to Plato's *Timaeus* we can trace in this reciprocal relationship the echo of the *koinonìa* between form and matter, or, better still, between determination through form (limitation) and reality through content (unlimited and exceeding) within existence in general, in which there is still the trace of the unconditional unity of the relationship. Philosophy's quest for this principle-condition from within the circle in which reason searches the *quid* on which reason stands, ends in the

non-theoretical mirroring of the unconditional (the positing and the posited of every being posited): "A strictly unconditional fundamental proposition has to have a content which is in turn unconditional, that is, this fundamental proposition cannot be conditioned by the content of some of the fundamental proposition" (SW I, 96; OP 44-45)[93]. This means that content "in its very origin is posited unconditionally" and as such is what "contains an absolutely independent original self and is posited not because it is posited but because it is itself that which posits". The content of this unconditional originally posited only through itself is the original Self *(ursprünglisches Selbst),* the *quid* that posits *(Setzende-the poisiting).* Schelling uses Fichte's term "I", which is the content originally posited through and by itself *(durch sich selbst).* The I (the content), on the basis of the reciprocity between form and content of the fundamental proposition, founds its own form: "Now the I is given merely as the I, therefore the fundamental proposition can only be I is I, (I is the content of the fundamental proposition; I is I is the material and the formal form, which induce each other mutually" (SW I, 97; OP 45). From the point of view of the form the situation is the same: "through this ultimate fundamental proposition, a *form of absolute positing* is given *(Form des absoluten Gesetztseyns)* that now itself becomes the content of the fundamental proposition" (SW I, 97, OP 45). The general expression of the form of absolute positing is A=A. This means that *the absolute and unconditional self-positing (i.e. conditioned through itself) has the form of identity.* Thus the I is the content of identity whose form determines objectively the expression of the I in its ex-sistence, in its position of positing itself. The A=A form of identity is the principle of the formal determination of the I in its being posited. The being posited is possible only because the unconditional is an "itself through itself". The I is the content of identity, but also the place of relationship and fracture: the ambit of the difference between the conditional and the unconditional. This implies that, on the level of the principle of the "positing being-posited", the *realization* of the identity through the *manifestation* of the implicit content of the explicit (the itself in itself and the Other) is originally necessary.

The I posits something beyond itself, and since the I is the content of the fundamental proposition, there must be another fundamental proposition. This second *Grundsatz:* the not-I is not the I. This proposition indicates the existence of a fundamental relationship between the two elements. The not-I is what the I is not: something else. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge

[93] I translated *"schlechtin"* with the word "absolutely", that which is in an absolute sense. I'm well aware that *"schlechtin"* can also mean "simply", "purely" and "as such" or "radically". I used all these meanings.

the autonomy of the negative opposed to the unconditional positive. If the not-I is not the I but something else, then the not-I is also necessary (even though conditioned), because its relationship with the I is necessary. The necessity of the not-I is the consequence of the original relationship from which it stems. The relationship between the I and the not-I is founded on the fact that the un-conditionality of the I is the condition of possibility of something else: " if the I should posit only itself, then all possible forms would be exhausted by the form of the unconditional that would condition nothing" (SW I, 98; OP 46). Otherwise the unconditional would be an absolutely closed totality: nothing could get out of it, and it would be meaningless to talk about it. The unconditional would be an absolutely metaphysical totality, an absolute nonsense that would resemble the god of a theology without epiphany and eschatology, paradoxically seen with the eyes of divinity itself. Thus the *Unbendingtheit* is not a totality but a position given within the ambit of the possibility.

Thus the not-I, that has the form of *being-conditioned,* is opposed to the I, that has the form of the unconditional. Schelling admits "that the I [that] in its very origin is posited unconditionally" must posit a not-I thanks to a process that takes outside the I, in a third element: "This third has its own origin in the fact that the I, while positing the not-I, also posits itself, in other words, the fact that the I and not-I exist only insofar as they are mutually exclusive" (SW I, 99; OP 46). *This is the only way in which the I exists.* The I posits itself only if there is the immediate positing of the separation of itself from the "other than itself": the radically unconditional has the form of the relationship between "what posits and conditions" and "what is posited and conditioned". The I can be comprehended as the unconditional since it is the content of identity. This presence of the unconditional in the conditional, in the reciprocal positing of I and not-I, finds again the reciprocity of the fundamental relation of the original possibility. I and not-I are originally united in nature. This unity is broken in order to give concreteness of the being-posited in the ideality of philosophical speculation. A=A says that the I draws its existence from itself, and that its possibility is self-determined. A=A, in its formal purity, also says that the I, is *the unconditional in its reciprocal relationship with the conditional.* The unconditional stems from itself and determines the conditional and the form of this process: "Through this a third fundamental proposition is now established, whose content is given unconditionally, because the I posits itself only by itself and, in so doing, it posits a not-I (by freedom). The form of this fundamental proposition, however is possible only through the form of the first and second fundamental proposition, a s a form of conditionality determined by unconditionality" (SW I, 99; OP 47).

A=A is the original ambit of the *zwischen* in the fundamental relationship between the being posited and the positing, or, better still, it is the ambiguity of this relationship that *induces* the unconditional to presents itself as finite and that *pushes* the conditional towards a return to its condition of possibility, to the original ambit of his co-belonging. A=A is absolute identity but also separation and shows that only the reciprocal nature of being (as the original ambit of possibility) allows us to think being in its identity with itself and with the "other than itself", and its union of I and not-I, of unconditional and conditional. Thus a theory of knowledge and representation is not a theory of the being of conditional and unconditional but its consequence: it is a determination of the absolute I. The activity of the absolute I is free in its form in theoretical philosophy even though the I, limited by the not-I becomes a finite I. Analogously, the activity of the absolute I is free in its content and its form in practical philosophy: the absolute I is an action and a decision from within its own limitation. It is also the subject-object in the ambit of possibilities originally opened by identity. Schelling doesn't forget his starting point: the exigency to find a philosophical principle that could explain how knowledge is possible. Schelling's starting point is Kant's distinction between analytical and synthetic judgments, but he is well aware that the interrogation of such principle cannot stop to assess its existence *(vorhanden),* but must also connect it to a higher principle (SW I, 103, OP 49).

Therefore Schelling identifies the analytical and the synthetical judgment with the forms of unconditionality and conditionality: "Those fundamental propositions give us: 1) A form which is absolutely unconditional, the form of the positing of a fundamental proposition which is conditioned by nothing but that fundamental proposition, and which therefore does not presuppose any other content of a superior fundamental proposition, in short, the form unconditionality (principle of contradiction, analytic form). 2) A form which is content of a superior fundamental proposition, form of conditionality (principle of sufficient reason, synthetic form). 3) A form which combines the two forms, the form of conditionality determined by unconditionality (principle of disjunction, connection of the analytic and synthetic forms)" (SW I, 104; OP 50).

Kant was unable to see this third original form of thought: the form that puts together *(Zusammenhang)* the original form and the particular forms, the ambit of possibility with the ambit of reality, unveiling the real necessity of the conditional through the unconditional. Schelling wants to clarify the sense of the fundamental proposition as the principle of the unconditional being posited, with no reference neither to the predicates, nor to the analytical (or identical) and synthetic propositions, that the posited might have. Schelling is convinced that the analytical propositions (the

propositions that tell us if a subject is posited in general trough a predicate) can be connected to their identity aspect. Thus Kant's categories are the particular forms of the original forms that Schelling really *(wirklich)* identifies with the forms of the relationship. Therefore: 1) categorical form=form of the unconditional being posited=modality of the general being posited unconditionally (principle of contradiction, analytical form). 2) Hypothetical form=form of the conditional being posited (synthetic form). 3) Disjunctive form=form of the conditional being posited through the unconditional (mixed form). The result is: 1) Quantity=the unconditional being posited is *unity,* the conditional being posited is *multiplicity,* the conditional being posited through the unconditional is *totality.* 2) Quality (reciprocally)=*affirmation (Bejahung), negation, limitation.* 3) Modality=*possibility, existence (Wirklichkeit), necessity.*

Schelling, through this audacious interpretation of Kant's table of categories, shows the condition of the unconditional and the necessary character of contingency. Modality is the decisive point: the form of the unconditional being posited is the form of possibility that in turn is the absolute condition of the *Wirklichkeit.* Since "even the proposition I=I inasmuch as it is posited unconditionally, has only possibility" (SW I, 108; OP 53), the form of modality is nothing but the form of the conditional being posited as actual reality. Reality is determined by possibility only through the union of these two forms: "in this manner all identical propositions are necessary. Inasmuch as they are unconditional, they stand under the form of possibility; inasmuch as they are conditioned by themselves, they are under the form of reality *(Wirklichkeit).* The proposition I=I as a categorical proposition is merely possible, yet inasmuch as it is not conditioned by a superior proposition but rather through itself, it becomes a necessary proposition" (SW I, 109; OP 53). This writing's title is *On the Possibility of a Form of All Philosophy:* Schelling wants to understand and describe the ambit of possibility of the philosopher in his attempt to understand the conditions of his being and knowledge. I=I is a *bloße Möglichkeit* because it is an identity, and has the form of the unconditional being posited in the general sense. Thus I=I is the *original form of the possibility of philosophy,* the principle of form and content of every knowledge (SW I, 109; OP 53-54). Therefore the content of every knowledge is: the I, the not-I and their product, which is determined by the form that in turn is the product of a paradoxical *coincidentia* of identity and difference. This paradoxical unity of identity and difference conceives the unconditional and the conditional as *possibility to be realized* and *realized necessity* in the entire form of subject, object and image (SW I, 111; OP 54).

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Chapter 4

THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE UNCONDITIONAL

THE ESSAY OF THE I AS THE PRINCIPLE OF PHILOSOPHY OR ON THE UNCONDITIONAL IN HUMAN KNOWLEDGE (1795)

1. The Relation of Opposition (Entgegensetzung).

[94]The discovery of Fichte's doctrine of science was as decisive as Schelling's relationship with Hölderlin and the absorption of his spiritual and poetical tendencies. The inquiries on the fundament of separation and the quest for the possibility to think unity within multiplicity were a common concern for the two young students of the Stift. Schelling's philosophical reflections are clearly influenced by the writings and the teachings of the Stift and by Fichte's doctrine of science. Schelling received from Hölderlin the inspiration about a specific philosophical horizon; from Fichte he took the language and the theoretical frame.

In Hölderlin's view the possibility of restoring the original harmony through a return to the primitive state of immediacy was confined within the ideal sphere. The yearning for a new unity was turned into the necessity of a continuous and general reassessment of man's life and destiny within the ambit of temporality. According to Hölderlin, the philosopher's dogmatic experiments of his period, were nothing but the illusion to represent what

[94] *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen,* in SW I, 149-244. *Of the I as Principle of Philosophy, or On the Unconditional in Human Knowledge,* in *The Unconditional and Human Knowledge, Four Early Essays (1794-1796),* Trans. Into English by Fritz Marti (London-Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1980 63-149 (OI).

could not be represented: what is without a form (the "Informal"), cannot be represented, but only celebrated through poetry. The inclination towards the empirical element stems from the consciousness that the only answer to the nostalgia of the lost unity is freedom; this becomes the fundamental principle of humanity in the age of reason (the result of the Fall), that shows the distance between our condition and unity. The only thing to do is to answer the need to think the fundament of this separation *from within* the separation itself: i.e. to think, to produce poetry and to compose following the eccentric trajectory that relates the unconditional to the unconditional. Man is rooted in separation, and strives to comprehend the connection between himself and the world, i.e. the original ontological condition of his existence; but this connection cannot be objectively represented: it is the condition of every representation of man and the *Cosmos.*

The original separation from the absolute becomes a separation of the absolute. The absolute is within life, within the finite world, and it is felt in its supreme connection to the world (Hyperion bears witness of this fact) through action and experience *(Infinitum in finitum).* Hyperion's slow but inexorable detachments from real life, and his withdrawal aimed at seeing the whole of the world, show the fundament of the aesthetic sense, that seeks the ambiguous zone in which the absolute within life manifests itself as beauty. Hölderlin's criticism against Fichte, and his fragment *Urtheil und Sein* (probably written in April 1795) must be interpreted within this context. This fragment rejects the possibility for the absolute I to be an objective absolute: the I is either consciousness or nothing. Hölderlin accepts the ontological aspect of consciousness, and therefore the I can still be a logically presupposed unity: but the I *stands upon* and *looks* to the abyss of separation. This abyss is the being that opens the ambit of the relation between subject and object. This relation is conceived, by intellectual intuition, as the moment in which I realize myself while I'm detached from myself, and the moment in which, *at the same time,* I realize the opposition between myself and the "other than me". Schelling's essay *Vom Ich* was published in March 1795, and it was written in a period of intense activity. On February the 4th 1795, Schelling wrote a letter informing Hegel about the essay. Schelling claims that he's become a Spinozist: he followed an opposite route, but he ended up with an analogous philosophical form: "In Spinoza the world (the object in the proper sense, in opposition to the subject) was *everything;* in my opinion the *I* is [everything]. It seems to me that the true difference between critical philosophy [Kant, and now Fichte] and dogmatic philosophy [Spinoza] lies in the fact that the first one moves from the absolute I (not yet conditioned by any object), while the latter [moves] from the absolute object, or not-I".

How is it possible for a fervent Kantian to become a Spinozist? And what does it means to be a Spinozist? The fundamental difference of the two philosophical approaches of Schelling's age was that the principle of philosophy (the very possibility of its beginning), the unconditional could be placed in the I or in the not-I. If the unconditional posits itself as the I, critical philosophy could bridge the separation between the conditional and the unconditional; if the unconditional is the not-I (as in Spinoza's philosophy) then external and substantial totality becomes the only possible reality. Schelling wanted to revolutionize this perspective: to say that the unconditional is posited in the I means that it is determined by the exigency of the unconditional. From the point of view of transcendental philosophy this means that philosophy does not begin with the unconditional absolute but with the unconditional positing itself in the opposition: with a co-originality and co-belonging of positive and negative position (Gesetzung) and limitation[95].

Many misinterpretations of Schelling's philosophy are the consequence of misunderstanding this crucial point. The starting point of philosophy it is not the "absolute as the I" but the I that is not conditioned by anything objective, but *necessarily opposed* to a not-I in its negative unconditionality. In the writing *Über die Möglichkeit* the unconditional I (posited through itself) founds the absolute I, and not vice versa[96]. The unconditional permeates and is the radical and pure existence in general. Schelling's I is not an absolute subjectivity, but the principle of the determination of both subjectivity and objectivity: it is, in Schelling's words in his letter to Hegel, freedom. Freedom is not an attribute of the I, but the I itself, in its actio and in its striving to overcome limitation. *"The essence (Wesen) of the I is freedom,* that is, it is not thinkable except inasmuch as it posits itself by its own absolute power *(Selbstmachi),* not, indeed, as any kind of *something,* but as sheer I." (SW I, 179; OI 84). Freedom ("the unconditional positing of reality in itself through its own absolute power") can be seen as the striving to overcome every determination and limitation, moving from within the connection of itself with itself and with other than itself, i.e., from the finite reality of existence stemming from the original separation. The I is not a self-conscious entity that strives "to maintain its identity and to reassert itself in the undertow of endless change"(SW I, 180, OI 84): the I is posited

[95] Eventually Schelling shall take the point of view of the absolute. See the *Darstellung* of 1801; see also M. Veto, *Le fondement selon Schelling* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 60.

[96] See I Vecchiotti, *Schelling Giovane* (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 1993). I personally share Vecchiotti's preoccupation to determine Schelling's absolute I on the basis of the exigency for the unconditional and not vice versa as in Fichte.

originally and therefore it is always antecedent, thanks to its unconditionality rooted in the original opposition.

Schelling's letter to Hegel sheds light on the ontological position of the fundamental proposition, based on the original evidence of separation between the element that is beyond any conditional determination and the element from which the primeval and free act to overcome the conditional stems. If the exigency of the unconditional is moved by freedom (and not by determined knowledge, and not by a reality rooted in the not-I), then every attempt to understand this unconditional is futile and doomed to failure. Theoretical knowledge stops at the limit of the categorical sphere, unifying the phenomenal world according to the intellect and to a calculating and objective representation. This means that the unconditional exceeds existence because it is its very condition: and every limitation of the absolute sphere must be broken. Thus the unconditional, in its opposition to the conditional, is pre-logical and pre-theoretical.

Man's extreme task, in his strife for the absolute, is the destruction of finiteness. This striving leads to the abyss in which the "Nevermore" tends to coincide with the One Absolute being. According to Schelling the destruction of the negative is a return, the transfiguration of the fundamental relation between the conditional and the unconditional, in which the opposition between these two elements is radicalized to the point of showing its finiteness in its most proper expression and being. Finiteness is the necessary contrast and the extreme danger for the unconditional, which could be a perfect *Ens incurvatus in se,* leaving to reason only the task to dominate the senseless exteriority of multiplicity. Nevertheless the exigency for the unconditional is the background and the condition of the finite I in its struggle against a blind and senseless exteriority (the real negative). This practical exigency shows the unconditional in its free position with the necessity of the presence of the not-I in the I: the necessity of the opposition of the not-I. The destruction of finiteness is the overcoming of the separation of counterposited terms and in the achievement of the possibility to think the relation in itself, of the self with itself from within the relation itself. The unity of the unconditional, from which philosophy stems, is an exigency that cannot be represented, but nonetheless present in every step taken by philosophy and life within the boundaries of the original conflict.

The destruction of finiteness presupposes its existence and its condition of possibility: its negative must be overcome in order to achieve its original condition. Thus the negative is affirmed not only as the accidental factor of the opposition, but also as the necessary element allowing the possibility to think the unconditional, and to take it out of a potential absolute darkness. The reckoning of the negative implies that the being-posited of finiteness is the first movement within the unconditional, the movement of the positing of

the original opposition: "It is the character of finiteness (*Endlickeit*) to be unable to posit anything without at the same time positing something in contrast *(entgegenzusetzen).* The form of this contrast *(Entgegensetzung)* is originally determined by the contrast of the not-I. For, while absolutely positing itself as identical with itself, the finite I must necessarily posit itself in contrast to every not-I. And that is not possible without positing the not-I itself." (SW I, 180; OI 84, footnote).

The unconditional limits itself, and does not appear as an infinite I, because this would exclude the finite, to which the I is necessarily opposed. This shows the "double cross" of freedom: the game in which the unconditional that posits itself and that opposes to itself the conditional, and the game of the return of the unconditional to itself, moving from the sphere of finite existence, as the determining moment of the original separation[97]. Therefore the task is to think *something (Etwas),* the I in itself, not as an object, but as something that can be comprehended only through an *intellectual intuition: the original relation of opposition between the unconditional and the conditional determined by the position of the I and by the opposition of the not-I* (SW I, 181; OI 85).

In the first pages of his essay Schelling wonders about the possibility of a knowledge that doesn't stem from another conditional knowledge, a knowledge that is a certitude of a "thatness" *(Eines),* standing on itself: the unconditionable real foundation of our unconditional knowledge: "In order to reach this last statement I do not have to presuppose some special kind of knowledge. If we know anything at all, we must be sure of at least one item of knowledge which we cannot reach through some other knowledge and which contains the real ground of all our knowledge." (SW I, 162-163; OI 71-72). This "thatness", or "something" *(Etwas)* in which and through which everything that is reaches existence *(zum Daseyn)* [...]. It can be thought only because it itself is, not because there is something else [and] it must produce itself through its being thought. It is the identity *between being and thinking* in the unconditional: the last ground for all reality is something that is thinkable only through itself, that is, it is thinkable only through its being (Sein); it is thought only inasmuch as it is. In short, *the principle of being and thinking is one and the same*". What it means to think the unconditional with the conditional, that is, to think the relation as it is and the opposition as such? The unconditional cannot be sought in objectivity, *because it is not an object.* "The object as such never determines its own

[97] Here we can see a noteworthy consonance with what Hölderlin, in his letter to his brother (see note 63) called man's universal contradiction between the desire for the absolute and the desire for finiteness.

necessity, simply because and insofar as it is an object. For it is object only inasmuch as it is determined by something else. Indeed, inasmuch as it is an object it presupposes something in regard to which it is an object, that is a subject. For the same time being, I call subject that which is determinable only by contrast with but also in relation to a previously posited object. Object is that which is determinable only in contrast with but also in relation to a subject." (SW I, 165; OI 73). Thus the two terms of the relation are thinkable only through their relationship. Only the relation as it is allows the comprehension of the ulterior principle for the determination of its terms. The unconditional cannot be sought neither in the object determined by the subject nor in the subject in itself: "because both are conditioned reciprocally, both are equally unserviceable." (SW I, 166; OI 74). The subject cannot be conceived as an absolute subject, and therefore we cannot find the unconditional thinking about the subject: "This kind of subject as such is also determinable as an object, and for this reason the endeavor to turn the subject into an unconditional fails, as does the endeavor with an absolute object" (Ibid.). Thus the absolute I is not an absolute subject. To see the subject of determined knowledge as the absolute is an error as serious as the error of seeing the object as the absolute.

The unconditional lies in the *Verhältnis* between subject and object. The unconditional determines the two terms of the relation, and connects them in the perspective of the unity of representation, the basis of a determined knowledge. The relation, and not the terms of the relation itself, provides the answer to the question "where the unconditional must be looked for?" (Ibid). The unconditional cannot be found on one neither of the two sides of the separation. According to Schelling, the original separation (that Schelling and Hölderlin both considered the ground on which man thinks and acts), plays its role of identity of act and expression founded on the *Grundsatz*. In order to think the being-posited through itself, the first and one absolute, it is necessary to abandon finiteness, orienting our thought not towards an absolute being, but towards the necessary and utterly paradoxical connection between the finiteness of existence and the exigency to destroy it. The fundamental relation and the fundamental separation between Eden and Earth, becomes the *ideal* and *real* relation and separation between finiteness and limitation on one side, and the exigency of infiniteness and unlimited on the other: this exigency is the fundamental sentiment dwelling within human reason.

The *Vom Ich* describes finiteness as the weakness *(Schwäche)* of reason, a weakness caused by the state of fall and guilt of reason itself: "[...] the forms of sense perception and of synthesis of its manifoldness are forms of finiteness as such, that is, they must be deduced from the mere concept of the I as conditioned by the not-I. Therefore, where there is an object there

must also be sense perception. Consequently any not-I outside of all sense perception (a thing in itself) annuls itself, that is, is no thing at all but is mere not-I and thus absolutely nothing. It has been said that our inability to know things in themselves is due to the weakness of human reason (a phrase which has been overtaxed endlessly). More properly, one might say that the weakness lies in the fact that we perceive objects at all." (SW, I 210-211, OI 106). The ineluctability of the exigency of the infinite was also stressed by Hölderlin: the unconditional can be comprehended only through intellectual intuition, the organ that can understand the relation as such. The unconditional must be sought in an ulterior presupposed principle, and therefore it cannot be thought of as a "thing" or as an object. Schelling writes: "*Bedingen* means the action by which anything becomes a *thing (Ding). Bedingt* (determined) is what has been turned into a thing. Thus it is clear at once that nothing can posit itself as a thing, and that an unconditional thing is a contradiction in terms. *Unbedingt* (unconditional) is what has not been turned into a thing, and what cannot at all become a thing." (SW I 166; OI 74). Thus the problem "where the unconditional must be looked for?" becomes the problem of finding something (the 'thatness') that cannot be though of as a thing at all.

Schelling's absolute I is the unconditional content *(un-be-dingt)* outside the sphere of objective proof: an absolutely original relation that can be considered the 'thatness' exceeding the subject-object relation and preceding every thought and representation in the identity of thought and being. 'I am' is an I that it is inasmuch is thought of, and that is thought of because it is. "My I contains a being which precedes all thinking an imagining *(Vorstellen).* It is by being thought, and it is being thought because it is; and all for only one reason– that is is only and is being thought only inasmuch as its thinking is its *own.* Thus it is because it alone is what does the thinking, and it thinks only itself because it is." (SW I 167; OI 75). 'I am because I am!' means that the I is determined as unconditional only though itself. The subject (conditioned I) is also determined by and absolute condition. The conditional is always posited as only by the unconditional and it is thinkable only through what is not a thing, i.e., the unconditional itself: "whatever is posited as only a conditional thing is conceivable only through that which is no thing at all but is unconditional." (SW I 170; OI 77).

The unconditional is unthinkable in itself, and can be thought of only and always in its opposition to the absolute I. It is the not-I which is thinkable only in its relation of opposition with the unconditional I. This is a decisive point of our interpretation: the object is not simply posited on one side of the relation, but seen in the context of its condition and therefore "op-posited" (as the not-I) to the I. There is a noteworthy affinity between this conclusion and Hölderlin's final considerations in the *Urtheil und Sein* fragment.

Schelling's absolute and unconditional I of the first paragraphs of his *Vom Ich* bears a striking resemblance to Hölderlin's whole, which contains in its unity subject and object. Hölderlin's being was a unity of unity and separation, exceeding the sides of the partition: this unity becomes event in the life in the spirit and is comprehended in poetry. Human nature, a separation of object and subject, is contained in the *Hen kai Pan* of absolute being, which can be represented only by intellectual intuition. Schelling's absolute I, which is only through itself, is analogous to Hölderlin's being conceived as *Hen kai Pan* (dominating and exceeding separation), quested by philosophy through the difference between subject and object, that is, through knowledge: "Everything is only in the I and for the I. In the I philosophy has found its one-and-all *(Hen kai Pan),* [...] All existence *(Daseyn)* rests on my I: my I is everything; in it and tending toward it is everything that is. Take away my I, and everything that is, is nothing [addition to the first edition]." (SW I, 193; OI 94).

The relation of opposition is co-original to the relation of position: the I not only posits the not-I, but finds it in the opposition of the original separation. The opposition allows to think the *Verhältnis* as it is because the unconditional *finds* the conditional within the relation, and the conditional *finds* the unconditional *through* the relation. This is the fundament of the paradoxical reciprocity of the unconditional and of the conditional: this is also the fundament of Schelling's overcoming of the philosophical dualism of dogmatism and criticism (SW I 170-173, OI 77-78).

Fichte conceives the I as an absolute subject that posits the not-I with an absolute act of opposition, but "nothing is originally posited but the I. [...] Now from this original op-posited also derives [...] that the original op-posited is absolutely unconditional from the point of view of form, and conditional from the point of view of matter", thus the logical principle of opposing (-A not=A) becomes the form of the negative. According to Fichte the principle of opposition is unconditional only in its form, leading us back to the absolute unconditionality of the I, the only true positing and posited *Ens,* that posits negation by itself and for itself[98]. Schelling thinks instead that the unconditional I originally posits the opposition: the I doesn't posit the not-I through a creative act, but rather it posits (gives origin to) the relation of opposition between itself and the "other than itself", between the subject (as the *ego cogito*) and the object. This is a relation between the unconditional that opens itself up in its relation with the conditional, and the

[98] J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre,* in *Fichtes Werke,* Hrsg v. I. H. Fichte, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1971, Bd. I, Zur theoretischen Philosophie, 103-105.

conditional that dramatically resists in its opposition to the unconditional in its becoming conditional through the relation.

This absolute act (positing the opposition), is the absolutely free act of the I am: this act would have been unconceivable for philosophy if the relation between the two opposites was not posited. This is the profound meaning of Schelling's paradox: The unconditional *is not* without the conditional, and vice versa. Only their relation sheds light on its terms in their original opposition. If this point is not fully understood, the I will be thought as somehow prior and antecedent to the not-I. The I, even though it is without the not-I, it's absolutely unthinkable outside the original separation that it has produced, and within which that 'something else' is rooted as its opposite. Schelling's critical philosophy of transcendental idealism, in its quest for the original opposition, demands this arduous theoretical leap, on the ground of the assessment of the paradoxical (but fundamental) relation between the unconditional and the conditional.

2.The Paradox of the Unconditional.

In his *Vom Ich* Schelling analyzes the limits of dogmatism and criticism. Dogmatism (Spinoza) presupposes the existence of an unconditional quid, an absolute object which is not a thing; criticism places everything in the I as a subject and thinks the not-I as negation, and in doing so, reduces the I to something empirically conditioned, that corresponds to the object in the unity of representation (Reinhold). This error, according to Schelling does not discriminate between the I conditioned by the not-I, or the not-I conditioned by the I (SW I 174, OI 80). The conditioned I and the not-I are reciprocally determined by something superior, as the principle of absolute position. The modality of this principle is the necessity of a relation of opposition posited in thought and freedom (therefore in action), and it is the exigency for the unconditional.

Schelling criticizes the subject-object dualism, and explains why his critical idealism is superior to dogmatism and criticism. Kant's system needed a *fact* (phenomenon or *noumenon*) as the founding principle of philosophy: the result was that either the not-I had to be absolutely posited or the thing had to be forced in itself within subjective representation. However, it's impossible to develop a philosophy on the ground of a mere fact, and to see its principle in the empirically conditioned I. In order to solve the question it is necessary to reformulate Kant's conception of the a priori synthetic judgments. In Schelling's view the unconditional posits the relation of opposition between itself and the not I, and broadens the horizon of criticism inquiring the unconditional I and the empirically conditioned I, and this changes the way the question should be formulated. The question

"How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?" becomes "How is it possible for the absolute I to step out of itself *(aus sich selbst herauszugehen)* and oppose itself to the not-I?". The conclusion is that: "the whole task of theoretical and practical philosophy is nothing else than the solution of the contradiction *(Widerstreit)* between the pure and the empirically conditioned I." (SW I 175; OI 81). These questions lead to a new definition of the terms *pure, experience* and *a priori:* "*Empirical* is everything that is in contrast to the pure I, everything essentially related to a not-I, even the original positing of any contrast *(Entgegensetzen)* as posited in some not-I, as positing which is an act that has its source in the I itself, the very act by which any contrasting becomes possible. *Pure* is what exists without relation to objects. Experienced is what is possible only through objects. A *priori* is what is possible only in relation to objects but not through them. *Empirical* is that which makes objects possible." (SW I 176; OI 81, footnote).

This implies that the relation of opposition that the unconditional (absolute I) posits in its stepping out of itself, opens the horizon of the empirical as it is, allowing the not-I to be realized as an object. The I does not posit the object but the possibility of the object, because it posits the relation in which the object becomes possible: the origin of the empirical is a moment of the stepping out from the unconditional. The conditional I is the I thrown and situated in the empirical, in order to form a determined knowledge as unitary and coherent as possible, and to allow the possibility of an action stemming from a free will. The conditional I is related to the unconditional I because the unconditional I posits the condition of its possibility to be and to act, stepping out of itself with an absolutely free action the spontaneity of the I [is] theoretical as well as practical (SW I 176; OI 82). Let us now see the paradox of the original separation, based on the concept of *Entgegensetzung*.

In § VII Schelling repeats that the original form *(Urform)* of the I must be pure identity, because the I (as being in Hölderlin) is through itself *(durch sich selbst ist):* "only that which is because it is, is determined in its own being by nothing but identity, that is, is determined by itself." (SW I 178; OI 83). The unconditional is identity, and identity is unconditional. Therefore the I is the content of the form of identity itself, because the I can bestow its identity on everything else that is *(Identität verlhein)*. The possibility of the "coming on essence" *(zur Wesens kommen)* lies in the identity of the absolute: the "not-thing" remains in silence and then steps out of itself: the identity of the existing, is only the acknowledgment of the repetition of identity in the absolute, that somehow passes through itself and is bestowed to what is opposed. The identity of the absolute I is bestowed on the identity of the existing and makes it identical. This identity is the repetition of the

original identity. The existing is because the I is. The exigency and the necessity of this repetition is caused by the fall of the autonomous I in its empirical immediacy, an by the situation of exile of the finite I: "What would it mean to posit something if all positing, all existence *(Daseyn),* all reality were dispersed constantly, lost ceaselessly, and if there were no common point of unity and stability that receives absolute identity, not through something else, but through itself, by its own being, in order to gather all rays of existence in the center of its identity, and to keep together in the sphere of its power all that is posited?" (Ibid.)

This is the *paradox:* the unconditional is formally thought for itself (A=A) and communicates its own identity and therefore its own existence: "How could anything be posited at all if everything that can be posited were mutable, and if nothing unconditional, nothing immutable, could be acknowledged, in which and through which everything that can be posited would receive stability and immutability?" (Ibid.).

The paradoxical statute of the unconditional stems from a common point between unity/permanence and multiplicity/mutability. There must be something immutable in the mutable, when the identity of the mutable is recognized as a repetition determined by the bestowing of identity by the immutable. According to Schelling, philosophy must be able to reach the common origin that keeps the conditioned from a dispersion in a senseless exteriority. The necessity of what is posited must therefore be recognized: the conditional is because the I *must* bestow on it its identity, and the conditional *must* necessarily be if the identical I is conceived as absolute freedom. This vision eliminates the risk (as seen by Jacobi in Fichte's philosophy) of destroying the evidence and the truth of the conditional through an annihilating speculation, creating a negative nihilism depriving the not-I of its reality[99]. In Schelling's vision the conditional is rooted within the essential co-belonging of unconditional and conditional, beyond every realistic dogma and beyond every philosophy of the subject.

The movement towards the unconditional begins with an exigency of the finite subject within the conditional. It is a kind of a return to itself and to the condition of the bestowing of identity. The exigency of the unconditional is man's supreme ethical need, thus repeating the absolute self-positing of the unconditional, from within the reality opposed to the unconditional itself. Therefore man must think on the same path, but in the opposite direction, of the original movement from the unconditional to the conditional and of the direction in which the absolute acts. It is therefore necessary to think how

[99] On negative nihilism and on the debate within the idealistic movement see F. Volpi, *Il nichilismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1996), 13.

the unconditional stepped out of itself to oppose itself to the conditional. This is what it means to think the opposition as such: this opposition must be conceived, as the affirmation of the unconditional and of the conditional, and as the affirmation of the conditional in its ascending and repeating movement towards the unconditional. Only through this repetition it is possible to think the unconditional: this is the task of intellectual intuition.

The strive to think the opposition from within the opposition itself is the true answer to the freedom of the I. To be within the opposition means to exist in finiteness *(Endlichkeit):* "to be unable to posit anything without at the same positing something in contrast *(entgegensetzen).*"(SW I 180; OI 84, footnote). According to Schelling every effort of the empirical I to think its own freedom and to act accordingly implies the risk of losing the absolute I: the not-I, that became objectivity could remain nailed to its own knowledge and action. The empirical I has always been posited within the opposition (in a opposition to the objective external reality) in the perspective of its distancing from itself and from things. Let us summarize this dynamics taking the opposite direction: the empirical I is limited by the not-I, and this relation creates the subject which is opposed to the object. The subject is the I think: the subject related to the object for the synthesis of representation. The I think is because it thinks the object. The not-I is posited in the opposition to the unconditional I (the I am) which posits itself. The unconditional posits the separation and the opposition in the moment in which it steps out of itself. Schelling's questions (how the unconditional steps out of itself and which is the relation between the absolute I and the empirical I) can be clarified only if we think the unconditional not in itself, but in its immediate and original relation with its opposite.

The unconditional stepping out of itself is the origin of the constitution and determination of finiteness. Finiteness is because there is opposition, and since the opposition shows that the unconditional is everything and also nothing in its relation with the not-I, finiteness (even though it is not an absolute original element) is a necessary and unavoidable character not only of human existence, but also of the existence of the object. The only way out of finiteness is through the risk, for the empirical I, to lose the unconditional, striving to think it through an empirical knowledge. Only the opposition and the separation in which the empirical I lives can and must be thought. This effort is safeguarded and granted by the freedom to think and to act, whose impulse is originally rooted in the unconditional itself in its detachment from itself. Every attempt to create a concept specifically aimed at comprehending the unconditional is destined to failure: concepts are possible only for objects.

According to Schelling's transcendental idealism the unconditional in its radical identity and opposition can be thought of, from within finiteness,

only through an intuition: "Therefore the I can be determined only in an intuition *(Anschauung).* But since the I is I only because it can never become an object, it cannot occur in an intuition of sense, but only in an intuition which grasps no object at all and is in no way a sensation, in short, in an *intellectual intuition.*" (SW I, 181, OI 85).

Through intellectual intuition we can see the opposition as it is from within: it is therefore possible to see the being of the unconditional in its original relation with the conditional. Thus intellectual intuition is the philosopher's main tool. Schelling quotes Jacobi, and writes: "The greatest merit of the philosophical scholar is not to establish abstract concepts not to spin systems of them. His ultimate aim is pure absolute being; his greatest merit is to unveil and reveal that which can never be conceptualized, explained, deduced, in short, to reveal the undissectable, the immediate, the simple." (SW I 186; OI 89)[100]. We can only have a knowledge of the conditional: the philosophy of critical idealism allows us to detach ourselves from an illusory knowledge, and to aim at the intuition of the general condition of knowledge. This movement begins from within the conditional, goes through the opposition and strives towards and exceeding element that shall never be *known,* but only *felt.* The unconditional is not known by intellectual intuition; capable of feeling and perceiving the unconditional in its opposition to the conditional, because the unconditional is within the finite opposition.

3. The Reality of the Opposition

The tenth paragraph of Schelling's *Vom Ich* is the turning point of the young philosopher's itinerary: it is strongly influenced by Fichte and has a series of ambiguities that are extremely interesting for our interpretation. Schelling text seems to dangle between the possibility of a "substantialization" of the I (leading him back towards a dogmatic metaphysics) and a critical reflection on the absolute condition of the conditional. It is now time to think *with Schelling and against Schelling* in order to understand his thought. Paragraph ten introduces the concept of *Realität* with these words "The I *contains all being, all reality.*" (SW I 186; OI 89)[101]. There is identity between the I and reality: there is no reality outside the I. If there were a reality outside the I, then the I wouldn't be unconditional, but conditioned by something else. Thus there can't be

[100] See F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (1798),Werke, BD. IV, Abt. I (Leipzig, 1819), 72.

[101] *Realität* shall be translated with reality, *Wirlichkeit* with factuality.

anything outside the absolute I because the I is the immediacy surmounting every *Übereinstimmung* (concordance of the opposites). If the I is all being and all reality, outside the I there is only nothingness and the premise for the possible concordance (or correspondence) with what is opposed to the I (which is the content of the two sides of formal identity) is only in the unconditional I.

The I (the content of identity) is the original ambit of the co-belonging of the two terms of the opposition, inasmuch as the I is. The absolute I becomes an I-reality within the relation of opposition posited as its first free and spontaneous act. The not-I can be only in its relation to the I, and the I can be itself only if op-posits the not-I to itself. Thus there must be a principle of concordance between the two that cannot be in only one of them. The possibility of concordance or correspondence between the I and the not-I is the principle of the original opposition itself. Schelling often seems to incline to an "absolutization" of the I (cutting away the not-I), but his own very reasoning reasserts that the two terms of the opposition are in the opposition itself. Even though Schelling strives to think the I in its unconditionality, the logical development of his reasoning continuously implies the not-I in its moment of opposition.

From an epistemological point of view the "I think" comes before the not-I because the I represents the not-I having a determined knowledge (through which we can think its condition of possibility) possible. However, from an ontological point of view the "I am" is co-original with the not-I, and therefore what is truly absolutely unconditional *(schlechthin unbedingt)* is the opposition: on its epistemological side there is the principle of concordance and correspondence, and on its ontological side there is Being. The I is absolutely posited by itself in identity, and the I is opposed to the I: this opposition is absolute *(schlechtin Entgegengesetzte)* as the act through which the I posits itself and the not-I. If the I is absolutely posited, then also the opposition is absolute, because is posited within the I along with the I itself. "The original not-I [...] is not simply posited *(schlechtin gesetz)* but absolutely counterposited *(schlechtin Entgegengesetz)* and, therefore, as antithesis; and, true to its quality as antithesis, it must be posited just as absolutely as the I, and in opposition to it." (SW I, 188; OI 90).

Schelling explains this important point: "But the opposition itself occurs absolutely, just as does the position of the I; and on that very account that which is absolutely posited in contrast *(schlechtin Entgegengesetzte)* to reality in absolute negation. The I posits a not-I in opposition to the I, and for this one cannot give any ulterior reason, just as one can give none for the I positing itself absolutely; [...]. The positing of the I is the placing in absolute opposition, that is, the negation, of what is not I. But originally nothing at all can be put in opposition unless something antecedent is

absolutely posited; much less can there be any absolute opposition without an antecedent position. Yet opposition occurs." (SW I 187, OI 90). The opposition takes place while the unconditional posits itself. The absolute opposition that becomes event corresponds to the positing of the I by itself *(durch sich selbst).* Therefore the opposition, in its absoluteness, is real. We cannot know, *from the point of view of the absolute I*, why the I opposes to itself a not-I, and we cannot know how the synthesis takes place, just as we cannot know why the I posits itself *(the beginning in itself)*[102].

Nevertheless we know that everything takes place in the same moment. This original instant (that remains hidden in the temporal continuity of existence) is the beginning of the absolute position of "something" and of its opposition to "something else" the opposition between *Realität* and *Negation* becomes factual in the relation between the I and the not-I. Schelling underlines this point: "[The absolutely counterposited not-I] stands in absolute opposition to the I, as absolute not-I, that is, absolute nothingness, or it becomes something, a thing– that is, it is no longer posited absolutely but conditionally, posited in the I, that is, it ceases to be a thing in itself."(SW I 188-189, OI 90).

The not-I is not absolutely posited, (as it is for a dogmatic approach) but counterposited. The not-I is original only in the opposition. Only the opposition is absolutely original, as the I positing itself through itself. The not-I, in its dawning moment is merely a thinkable entity with no reality in itself. It is posited as absolute nothingness "about which one can say nothing, nothing at all, except that it is mere antithesis to all reality".

Thus there's no absolute : there is no thatness leaving its space to nothingness. Nothingness is not a mere lack of presence. Nothingness is what doesn't posits itself through itself, that is, the not-I deprived of reality. It is absolute not-being, and it is only because it is posited in the I as the supreme opposition, that is preliminary to the opposition between the I and the not-I. This supreme preliminary opposition acquires the form of the fundamental metaphysical question: why there is being (and not beings) instead of nothing? nothingness, in order to be the not-I must first obtain reality: in order to be opposed to the I, must be removed from the supreme opposition with the "unitotal" being that is the condition of reality.

The not-I can be opposed to the I only if the I posits within itself the not-I. The not-I, in its opposition, is conditioned by the opposition itself, which is rooted in the fundament of the unconditional I in its positing itself. The not-I must become something, i.e., a thin unconditionally posited by the I.

[102] M. Vetö talks about the beginning the ideal event that produces the opposition, as "abyss" and "indifference". See M. Vetö, *Le fondement selon Schelling,* op. cit., 85.

Thus the not I obtains its reality through the action of the unconditional I: the positing of the not-I by the unconditional I is the reality of the not-I. This positioning implies the possibility of representation: (to receive reality=to become imaginable). In other words *the transfer of the form from the I (form of being and reality, of unconditionality and oneness) to the not-I imparts reality.* This is the solution of the contradiction that Schelling describes as follows: "Inasmuch as the I originally counterposits to itself a not-I (and does not simply exclude it as does the absolute I), it posits itself as canceled. But since, at the same time, it ought to posit itself absolutely, it will in turn posit the not-I absolutely canceled, =0. If, therefore, it posits the not-I absolutely, it cancels itself; and if it posits itself absolutely, it cancels the not-I. Yet both of them ought to be posited." (SW I 189, OI 91).

Once again the question concerning the a priori synthetic judgments also concerns the modality with which the absolute I steps out of itself. The I recognizes the opposition as the movement of its own stepping out of itself: "therefore the I can only impart reality to the not-I; it can posit the not-I as reality only if combined with negation. The not-I has no reality as long as it is only counterposited to the I, that is, as long as it is pure, absolute not-I. As soon as reality is imparted to the not-I, it must be posited as contained in the very concept of all reality, that is in the I; it must cease, to be pure not-I" (Ibid.). The I cannot eternally remain in its absoluteness: there is a sort of necessity of the unconditional. The I feels the unavoidability of the opposition and the subsequent stepping out from itself and the bestowing of reality on the not-I. This necessity is part of the spontaneity of the absolute I. The I removes itself from its absolute position and posits the condition of the opposition between itself and the not-I. The not I, in turn, becomes a reality through the transfer of the form *(die Übertragung der Form).* This is the synthesis of the categories through which the original not-I receives reality and becomes representable ceasing to be the absolute not-I. Nothingness becomes *Realität* and it is about to become *Wirlickheit* (the objective world). The not-I is real inasmuch the I is real, through a communication of its form of being and reality. This is the in-formation of the form of unconditionality and unity through which the relation of opposition becomes real and the fundament of the representation of objectivity.

It seems that Schelling is following some of the steps that he found in Plato's *Timaeus.* The I communicates its reality through a spontaneous transmission of form to something that is undetermined and invisible, and nonetheless pre-existing form itself. This movement is analogous to Plato's idea of a divine intellect bestowing form on the original matter. The question concerning the essence of the not-I before its acquisition of form and before its being determined and opposed by the absolute in itself has not yet been analysed. Schelling, in its *Vom Ich,* seems to consider the not-I, before its

acquisition of reality, as nothingness, an abyss of indetermination, the negation of every transcendence. This nothingness, if compared to Plato's original matter, is opposed to the totality of being in the plenitude of its immanence. However, this plenitude is broken in order to create the opposition that opens the horizon of existence *(Daseyn)*. However, The question about how the reality of the opposition between the thinking unity and the impenetrable and undetermined empirical multiplicity is possible remains an open question[103].

4. The Tasks of Practical Philosophy.

Theoretical philosophy cannot investigate the opposition between the self-limitation of the I and the reality of the not-I. According to Schelling, a theoretical synthesis would deprive the I of its absolute reality, and would also give to the objectiveness of reality an independent and autonomous existence from the I. Such an approach is once again dogmatic. The condition of possibility for a unity of knowledge would be lost: this possibility is the immanence of being rooted in the opposition. The objective reality of the not-I (the empirical I in general) is not contemporary to the reality of the I. The I, in its unconditional identity with itself, communicates its reality to the not-I. The I and the not-I can be conceived as co-original only at the level of the pre-objective and pre-categorical absolute opposition that anticipates reality. Theoretical analysis is completely impotent within this specific ambit, and should abandon this field of inquiry to practical philosophy, "whose aim must be the end of all not-I and the recovery of the absolute I in its ultimate identity, that is, as the connotative concept of all reality." (SW I 191, OI 92).

Several paragraphs of Schelling's *Vom Ich* (§§ 11, 12, 13, 14) deal with the problem of the reality of the I and of the not-I. In these paragraphs (in which there is a strong influence of Spinoza's metaphysics), Schelling identifies the I with the substance in which everything is, the principle in which philosophy has found its *Hen kai Pan.* The absolute I has left the field to the I, that in turn removes itself in order to be real and to bestow reality on the not-I. Schelling can therefore talk about "my I" and "your I" as the

[103] See M. Vetö, *Le fondement selon Schelling,* op.cit, 62: "c'est sans doute l'idée qui communique sa réalité á une portion de la matiêre en la déterminant, mais quelle est la nature de ce qui se trouve ainsi déterminé avant sa détermination ou plutôt abstraction faite de toute détermination? L'indéterminé, le multiple, le non-structuré, mais quel est le mode de leur existence en soi, si toutefois on put encore parler de 1'existence en soi de ce qui n'est qu'exteriorité, si on peut poser 1'autre comme tel de ce qui est le contrarie même de 1'essence?".

concrete "Is" upon which is based every existence *(Existenz)* of multiplicity. Thus the I (infinite substance and basis for the *Realität* in its evidence, unifies in itself the being and the essence of all reality. "Thus the I is not only the cause of being but also the cause of the essence of everything that is." (SW I 195, OI 95).

This particular type of Spinozism, rooted in the dawning philosophy of transcendental philosophy, leads directly to practical philosophy within the state of realized reality (after the self-removal of the absolute I), it is therefore possible to reach the unconditional through the conditional. A representation of the identity of form and content is clearly impossible. Thus we cannot represent being in itself *(Seyn),* but only existence *(Daseyn);* and we cannot represent the unconditional and the conditional before their realization because we cannot represent neither reality as a whole nor nothingness. Therefore we cannot have a representation of the opposition in itself because the opposition is the fundament and the *prius* of the principle of representation itself. The only way to re-establish the original form is to comprehend the conditions of the moral identity of the finite I, that is, to proceed in the opposite direction of the movement with which the absolute I removed itself, stepped out of itself and oppose to itself the not-I. This implies the repetition of the conflict between the pure I and the conditional I. We must begin with the conditioned I and from the factual situation in which the conditioned I finds itself, aiming at the comprehension of the conditions of possibility of the empirical conditional in the unity of empirical laws.

According to Schelling this is possible through the connection between morality and nature and the concept of moral effort. The ultimate goal of morality is not happiness, a simple ideal of our imagination, but the radical and complete self-annihilation of the not-I accomplished through the process of identification of the not-I with the I. "Since the not-I should become the object of a striving determined by freedom, it must be raised from the form of conditionality to the form of unconditionality. Yet, since the not-I as not-I is to become the object of this striving, only a sensuous, i.e., an imaginable unconditionality can be attained, i.e., the raising if the not-I itself can produce only a form which cannot be reached by any form of the intellect *(Verstand)* or sensibility *(Sinnlickheit).* Such a mediation between conditionality and unconditionality is possible only for the power of imagination *(Einbildungskraft).* The idea of a bliss therefore arises originally only through a theoretical operation. Represented *practically,* it s nothing other than a necessary harmony of the not-I with the I, and since the attainment of this harmony is an infinite task for the I, it remains even in its practical meaning a mere idea which can be realized only in an infinite progress." (SW I 197, OI 97, footnote).

The realization of the not-I within the opposition, and the surrender to the exigency of its annihilation in the restoration of the absolute I, is possible because what became freedom (mediacy) must be able to become nature (immediacy). Man, living among the other phenomenal entities of the objective world must take back what was originally immediate, and he can reach this goal only within the sphere of freedom: "For, the absolute I demands that the finite I should become equal to it, that is, that it should destroy in itself all multiplicity and all mutability. What is *moral* law for the finite I, limited by a not-I, is *natural* law for the nonfinite I – that is, is *given* simultaneously with and in its mere *being* (*Seyn*)."(Ibid.).

Schelling's exigency to build a philosophy of nature in harmony with transcendental idealism stems from an ethical necessity, and not from an epistemological need. The law of nature of the absolute I is identity: the I is absolutely unconditional in itself. Being and identity coincide in the absolute I, and the self-positing of the I is the position of the unconditional. The unconditional self-positing, in order to be a position, must be conceived in its relation of opposition with the conditional. The unconditional steps out of itself, and abandons its immobile and ecstatic position in order to correspond to reality. The unconditional and the conditional share the same root. Thus *the opposition is the proper form that the unconditional acquires in the ambit of its being thinkable.* Through the movement of self-limitation of the absolute I *(Mittheilung),* the finite I is separated from the immediacy of being and identity, and placed within the finite conditional with the task to transform moral law into natural law: "Therefore one could also say that the ultimate goal of the I is to turn the laws of freedom into laws of nature, and the laws of nature into laws of freedom, to bring about nature in the I, an the I in nature." (SW I 198, OI 98, footnote). This pushes the subject towards the complete overcoming of the theoretical and subjective appropriation, which elevates the subject from separation to a re-appropriation of the state of innocence. The need for this transformation is the exigency for identity: the finite I strives towards this identity (which it doesn't possess), and the achievement of this result is its ultimate goal. To "be absolutely identical with yourself" is the objective of the efforts of the finite I in its existence and *against* its existence, an objective that corresponds to the original being-itself of the unconditional I.

Schelling expounds the moral identity of the finite I as the battlefield of the unavoidable conflict within the horizon of existence. Schelling also recognizes that the scheme is unrealizable within existence, since this scheme is real only in the immediacy of the absolute. This necessary exigency stems from Schelling's interpretation of the categories: "According to *quantity:* become absolutely one [...] become a *totality* contained in yourself. According to *quality:* simply become reality [...] elevate the

negation in yourself to reality, i.e. give yourself a reality, which *ad infinitum* (in time) can never be cancelled. According to *relation:* become absolutely unconditional, strive for absolute causality. [...] According to *modality:* strive to posit yourself in the sphere of absolute being, independent of the change of time. Striving is possible only in time, therefore striving for liberation from all change of time means striving in all time. Thus the law can also be expressed as: Become a *necessary* being, a being which endures in *all time*." (SW I 199-200, OI 98, footnote).

The finite I is on one side of the original opposition: it is forgetful of the beginning, and it strugges between morality and nature. The finite I is a prey of the conflict between mediacy and immediacy. The answer to this situation is the *Streben,* the exigency to oppose oneself to the dispersion and the senselessness of multiplicity. The ethical effort prepares the advent of intellectual intuition and of the radical differentiation between (theoretical) knowledge and (ethical and aesthetical) comprehension.

Reality becomes itself through the movement of the stepping out of the absolute I from itself, which immediately establishes the opposition, is the totality of the *Ens* (the empirical multiplicity that must be comprehended in its unity), and also the horizon of the becoming of being. The realized not-I is the sphere in which being appears as existence *(Daseyn)* and become present *(Wesen)*. The not-I is also the necessary and real horizon from which is possible to begin the journey to understand the fundament of its opposition to the absolute I. Being as identity is the essential characteristic of the absolute I: "The I posits itself absolutely, and posits all reality within itself. It posits everything as pure identity, that is, equal to itself." (SW I 216, OI 110). *The material original form (Urform)* is the unity of positing of the I. The I posits and affirms itself at the same time. The positing and the affirming of itself are identical in the I, in the ecstatic situation that anticipates the positing of the opposition.

The formal form of the positing in the I in general is necessarily deducted from the identity of the I positing itself. The I is not only identity with itself, but also the substratum *(Substrat)* and the formal condition of the positing in general (in the I). The universal expression of this identity is A=A. This formula expresses the self-positing of the I (its being) and the condition of possibility of the position of the not-I in general and of the opposition. Opposition from man's point of view, is the unconditional co-belonging of the absolute, the fundamental impulse of moral tension. A=A is the principle that shows the being and the identity of the I in itself. A=A expresses the idea that the position in general is the condition of the position of other-than-itself, that is, of the opposition. The overcoming of this situation takes place only through the man's moral development (SW I 217, OI 110).

The ethical imperative: *"be absolutely identical with yourself",* shows the moral conflict between morality and nature (between fall and innocence) and traces the metaphysical contour within which existence has been established: "This contradiction between the moral and the natural law of finiteness can be mediated only through a new schema, that of production in time, so that the law which aims at a demand of being becomes a law of *becoming.*" (SW I 199, OI 98).

The movement of the impartment of reality or transfer of form becomes the movement of the production of time aimed at the annihilation of the world as the horizon of finiteness. The unconditional of the opposition between the finite and the infinite (the original condition of the finite I) is revealed through this movement of return to the identity of the absolute I. The finite I initially finds itself in opposition with the infinite. The finite I, from this original situation, begins its journey towards the infinite. Thus the infinite is not transcendence but an internal exigency of the finite I. The two terms are not merely counterposited: they are two moments of the opposition whose position constitutes a higher moment: the moment of identity in the difference between the unconditional and the conditional. They co-belong one to each other and they stem from the same root. Even though Schelling expresses the intention to think the two terms separately, it is clear, the unconditional and the conditional are always joint together in the immanent relation of opposition. In this relation the unconditional lets the conditional be, and comes to being through this act. The conditional is the object of Schelling's careful but initial and prudent investigation.

The dynamics of the striving towards the infinite I, through its opposition to the finite I, regains its original form *(Urform)* of pure and eternal being through the intellectual intuition[104]. This event takes place through the synthesis that is the journey towards the unconditional: "All synthesis proceeds by taking that which is absolutely posited and by positing it anew but *conditionally* (with qualifications). Thus, in its original opposition [to the I] the not-I is posited *absolutely* but, on the very account, also posited as simply zero, because an unconditional not-I is a contradiction in terms, i.e., simply nothing. To be sure, in the synthesis the not-I receives *reality* but thereby also loses its [apparent] unconditionality, i.e., it becomes reality

[104] On the intellectual intuition see the fundamental study by X. Tilliette, *L'intuition intellectuelle de Kant á Hegel* (Paris: Vrin 1995); K. Jaspers, *Schellings Größe und sein Verhängnis,* in "Studia Philosophica", XIV, 1954, 12-50; W. Schulz, *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Pfullingen, 1975), 114-122; J. Neubauer, *Intellektuelle, intellektuale und ästhetische Anschauung. Zur Entstehung der romantischen Kunstauffassung,* "Deutsche Vierteljahrs Schrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte", 1972, 294-319.

connected with negation, conditional (limited) reality. Thus the not-I is originally posited outside of all time, just as the I is, but it therefore also equals zero; as it receives reality it loses its being posited outside of all time and is posited in a *specific time.* Finally a new synthesis posits it in all time, i.e.., the *absolute* eternity of the I becomes *empirical* eternity in the not-I, inasmuch as the latter receives its reality through the I." (SW I 203, OI 100, footnote).

This astounding passage stimulates a series of serious questions. What did Schelling mean, saying that the not-I is "absolute=0"? this equation means that the not-I is absolute inasmuch it is posited in the original opposition. The absolute I positing itself, also posits the opposition. Thus, from man's point of view, the unconditional is the opposition between the absolute I and the absolute not-I, i.e., the original datum according to which there is an opposition unveiling the original conflict between the whole and nothingness, being and becoming, identical and multiplicity, which is their reciprocal co-belonging. The opposition removes the absolute position, but the synthesis reveals its origin, also showing in the background the absoluteness of the original position. Thus the not-I is posited as conditional and as limitation and opens itself to the sphere of the heteronomy of the I. We cannot comprehend the synthesis of the absolute in itself, but only repeat its movement through the synthesis of the unity of the empirical multiplicity accomplished by the finite I.

This synthesis is the unity and the identity of the finite moral conscience, an infinite task that can never be completely fulfilled by man, which is a finite being. Since our conscience receives its reality at the same time in which the not-I receives its reality, the original opposition is again re-presented between the finite I and empirical reality. This opposition now takes place between knowing subject and known object, representation and represented entity.

According to Schelling, the history of the absolute opposition takes place in the temporality of the finite counter-positing, within which the journey that shall transform our moral being into a natural being begins. This conception is consistent with Schelling's vision of man's fall into the finite sphere of life, and furthers the philosopher's interpretation of the *Timaeus,* concerning of the reproduction of man's original separation from within the visible world of experience. In a note Schelling expounds the nature of the absolute opposition between the I and the not-I, also explaining why the not-I is =0 (that is why the not-I is unconditional and conditional at the same time). The not-I is opposed to the absolute, and therefore conditional, but it is also *absolutely* opposed to the I, and therefore unconditional. Thus the I removes this contradiction through a synthesis, bestowing reality on the not-I. The not-I is posited within the reality, the totality and the identity of the I,

and it is therefore posited as the conditional. The not-I is limited by what was absolutely posited in the thesis and in the antithesis: "Therefore, in the synthesis, the absolute unity of the I becomes empirical unity, thinkable only as unity in relation to multiplicity *(category of unity);* the absolute multiplicity of the not-I becomes empirical multiplicity thinkable only in relation to unity *(category of multiplicity);* the absolute reality of the I becomes conditional reality thinkable only in relation to qualifying negation *(category of reality);* the absolute negation of the not-I becomes a negation thinkable only in relation to reality *(category of negation);* the absolute unconditionality of the I becomes empirical unconditionality thinkable only in relation to conditionality *(category of substance);* the absolute being of the I becomes a being determinable only in relation to not-being *(category of possibility),* and the absolute not-being of the not-I becomes a not-being determinable only in relation to being *(category of existence).*" (SW I 214, OI 108, footnote).

5. An Immanent Philosophy.

The finiteness and temporality of the not-I forms the *Realität.* How is it possible to think simultaneously the ethical *Streben* and the absolute? To reach the absolute implies a practical passage to the supersensible, which is not a leap into transcendence. The opposition is always a double position, a com-position of two sides that are reciprocally immanent. The movement of separation is an immanent tension that Schelling posits within the absolute I, which is conceived as the original unity containing in itself the separation[105].

The affirmation of the absolute I requires the determination of an immanent philosophy, that does not posit the I as an object, but that thinks the I for itself and in its being. Schelling's immanent philosophy comprehends the paradox of the unconditional: since it's impossible to think the absolute of the absolute I, the young philosophers thinks that the I can be only intuited (but not as an object). However, an immanent philosophy that thinks the I without a not-I is a philosophy that, after the annihilation of every not-I, places itself within the absolute Unitotality (the point of view of the absolute I). This annihilation (the removal of the reality that the I communicated) is a distancing from the *Realität* and from the real situation in which the finite I is placed. To "make nothingness" is a return to the

[105] See M. Vetö, *Le fondement selon Schelling,* op. cit., p. 70: "[...] la radicalisation du concept de non-intelligible érigé en non-moi, ne marque pas l'exacerbation de l'équivoque de la métaphisique classique, mais plutôt inaugure l'investigation du caractère originellement en scission de l'autre du moi".

beginning as indifference and abyss and to the ecstatic condition of the paralysis of the subject. This is an infinite task that can never be fully accomplished: a transcendental philosophy (even if conceived as immanent) cannot completely and definitely remove from its horizon of interrogation the perspective of the finiteness of the not-I and the temporality of the empirical element.

The organ of Schelling's immanent philosophy is intellectual intuition, i.e., a not-sensible intuition that allows the spirit to enter the realm, which is unachievable for the sensible and mediated element, and to face the abyss from which it stems. Pressing on the results of the solution of the psychological paralogism of the *Critique of Pure Reason*[106], Schelling affirms that the absolute I must not be thought of as an object with a substance that can be intuited sensibly, but as the quid that realizes itself excluding every other external reality (the thing in itself): "I think; I am!, – these are purely analytical propositions. But the Transcendental Dialectic turns the I into an object and argues that *whatever* thinks is; and that *whatever* is thought as [if it were] an I is an I. This is a synthetic proposition, by which something *which* thinks is posited as a not-I. Yet a not-I does not create itself through its thinking, as an I does!" (SW I 206, OI 103).

The I is the nonobjective being. It does not correspond at all to the logical I of consciousness. This logical I is the I think (the empirical I) that, placed within mutability *(Wechsel)* feels the exigency to remain identical to itself. This feeling is the pretense of an identity that the empirical I does not have. This movement is the synthetic process of production: "[the empirical I] strives to elevate the objects which change it, to a unity (by categories) and thus, through the identity of its striving, it establishes the identity of its existence *(Daseyn)* as a lasting principle of image production *(Princip der Vorstellungen)* in the change of time." (Ibid.).

Within experience the empirical I aims at the synthetic unity guided by the conditions of possibility of representation. Thus the empirical I exists in the unity of the apperception that accompanies the concepts in their relation to object. In this empirical I Schelling sees the "I think", which is the transcendental subjectivity that with the intellect repeats (theoretically and practically) the spontaneity and the synthesis possessed by the absolute I (immediately and practically).

The determination of the principle of representation is not enough to determine the I in its being: the "I am". The "I think" cannot help us to understand how the not-I is possible the separation caused by the communication of reality is already a *fait accompli:* it is surrounded by the

[106] I. Kant, *Werke in zehn Bänden,* op. cit., Bd. 4, 341-359, B 399, 400; A 341-B428.

objective horizon and it is both consciousness and body. The "I am" (an identity of identity and being) can fulfill this task because the I is the being that anticipates every existence determined by the fundament of the opposition. Within the sphere of experience the I can be understood only as the logical subject within consciousness, which is determined in time as existence. The "I think" (the logical I) from within the sphere of experience is a transcendental principle "only as a principle of something determined in the mere unity of thinking, something that loses all reality if imagined as outside the thinking." (SW I 207, OI 103). It is a merely thinkable I contained in the unity of consciousness and it is comprehensible only through an original and absolutely present unity of an absolute I. The absolute I is absolute reality determined by intellectual intuition. It is self-realization and self-production. Thus the absolute I cannot be appearance and cannot be an object: otherwise it would fall in the paralogism of dialectic that conceives the I as an object that can be determined independently from consciousness. The absolute I exceeds the ambit of the empirical showing once again to be its condition of possibility, situated beyond every possible theoretical comprehension.

This step towards the fundament of the distinction between the unconditional and the conditional shows Schelling's understanding of the relation between being and existence. "It is remarkable that most languages have the advantage of being able to differentiate between absolute being and every kind of conditioned existence." (SW I,209, OI 105). However, the philosophers never paid sufficient attention to the precise differences between the words being *(Seyn),* presence *(Daseyn),* existence *(Existenz)* and factuality *(Wirklichkeit).* According to Schelling being is what is absolutely posited through itself *(un-be-dingt):* it is a thatness that cannot be reduced to a concept.

Factuality is a determination of the conditional being posited through a determined condition originated by the passage of form from the indistinct to the distinct. There is also a corresponding separation between sensible intuition (that sees the realization of the not-I as forms of finiteness showing the sensible correspondence with the object from within the phenomenal world) and intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition produces, with no representation, the being of the absolute position through the continuous effort of practical reason to overcome the domain of existence and its undetermined fracture, aiming at the identification with the original an a-temporal spontaneous act with the absolute stepped out of itself. This journey cannot be completed within the sphere of our existence: and this existence is the only one that we. Thus Schelling boldly affirms the purely ethical essence of human existence. The absolute, from the point of view of existence *(Daseyn),* is not a thing: it is an infinite and necessary task of

practical reason, that accompanies every trace that man leaves behind in his existence, and that can never be fully accomplished[107].

In a very interesting note, Schelling writes: "[the moral I] strives to elevate (*umkeheren=bring* back) all factuality to the level of pure being and, since its being conditioned by the not-I has dragged it down into the sphere of existence, it strives to raise itself again from that sphere. [...] the infinite task of practical reason, to make absolute being and empirical existence *(empirisches absolutes Seyn)* [are] identical in us. Since even in an endless time empirical existence cannot be elevated to absolute being, and since absolute being can never be presented (dargesstelt) in the domain of factuality as being *factual* in us, reason demands infinite existence *(unendliches Daseyn)* for the empirical I. For the absolute I contains eternity in itself and can never be reached by the concept of duration *(Dauer),* even of infinite duration." (SW I 209, OI 105).

The infinite ethical task cannot be realized: it remains within the sphere of finiteness as the ideal of the identity of the absolute and the contingent, of *Seyn* and *Daseyn.* This task draws philosophy within the ambit of existence and its determinations. This task becomes a manifestation of existence, which is the condition of the fall of being, of the absolute and of the identical into the realm of the conditional and of multiplicity. An immanent philosophy is a philosophy that strives towards synthesis from within the separation and the realized original fracture. This philosophy questions the condition of possibility in general while it has to deal with this "something" immediately. This type of philosophy is neither realism (dogmatism) nor idealism. The re-petition of the absolute, that is, its comprehension as the unconditional which is the condition of all knowledge and existence, must deal with the opposition of the not-I and with the forms of finiteness (sensible intuition and synthesis of multiplicity). This is why this immanent philosophy cannot be considered as a mere form of idealism. This

[107] Another limit of theoretical philosophy is the fact that, attributing to God an existence, it reduces God to an object. Properly speaking God does not exist as any other being. Otherwise He would be empirically conditioned. "Nevertheless one speaks commonly of the existence *(Daseyn)* of God, as if God could really exist, that is, could be posited conditionally and empirically." (SW I 209, OI 105). In practical philosophy God is identical to the absolute I because of the annihilation of every Not-I, and He does so because "He beholds no thing (Ding) at all but only himself and all reality as posited equal to himself. (From that it is clear that God is what we can only strive to realize in infinity)." (SW I 211, OI 106). According to Schelling the annihilation of the not-I, the thinking of itself and the placing of everything in itself with the exclusion of all objects are the same thing. This is the strongest rejection of Spinoza's type of dogmatism and the foundation of the essence of the moral being. One might say the imperative "Be identical!" means "Be as God!".

philosophy also cannot be considered a form of mere realism: it refuses to posit the existence of the not-I independently from its absolute opposition to the I. This choice would negate the being of the I and its reciprocity to the being of finiteness: it would therefore be impossible to turn back multiplicity into unity and the informal visible element into the invisible forming element.

An immanent philosophy can be a radical philosophy of being and identity (A=A) only if it sticks to its striving, through the synthesis of I and not-I towards the unconditional. This philosophy identifies itself with the point of view of man as philosopher and tries to comprehend the radical opposition in which man lives. Any attempt to think and to speak about the absolute I in itself, would only lead to an *analytical proposition,* formally expressing the material form of the unconditional, i.e., the unity of its intuition through a mere tautology: A is A. This is the proposition that indicates that the reality of the I coincides with its being, and that its being coincides with its being posited as identical to itself (SW I 218-219, OI 111-112). We do not dwell in the point of view of the absolute I (we are not identical to ourselves in our own being), but *we must become identical* within the horizon of finiteness, which is conditioned by the position of the not-I within the opposition posited by the I. Thus we are within the opposition between the I and the not-I. Philosophy itself is placed within the contradiction of "thetical" and antithetical proposition that express a multiplicity, and it starts from this situation, striving through this conflict towards the synthesis.

This immanent philosophy allows the passage from the conditional to the unconditional: a journey in the opposite direction to the direction originally taken by the *Mittheilung* of form. The *Mittheilung* is the re-composition of division *(Theilung)* and, in Hölderin's words, separation *(Trennung).* The communication of reality from the to the not-I means to overcome the division, bridging the gap between its two terms and keeping them separated for what they are in the opposition. The synthesis operated by this philosophy begins with the comprehension of the two terms of the opposition and ends with the overcoming of division through the comprehension of the movement of communication.

Schelling himself expounds the internal mechanism of this philosophy: "Pure being is thinkable only in the I. The I is posited purely and simply. The not-I, however, is in contrast with the I, and therefore, according to its original form, it is *pure impossibility,* that is, it cannot be posited in the I at all. Still, it ought to be posited in the I, and the synthesis brings about this positing of the not-I in the I by means of identifying the form of the not-I itself with the form of the I, that is, it strives to determine the not-being of the not-I through the being of the I." (SW I 223, OI 115). This *streben zu*

identificiren zu bestimmen is the synthesis, the bridge between the not-I and I that turns impossibility into reality, realizing the synthesis of being and non-being. The mediating character of this synthesis is clarified by Schelling himself: "Since *pure being* is the original form of all positability in the I, and since the positability of the not-I in the I can be accomplished only by synthesis, the form of pure being, if transferable to the not-I, can be thought only in terms of strict conformity with the *synthesis as such.* (In Kant's language: *objective possibility,* i.e., possibility pertaining to an object as such, is contained only in conformity with a synthesis. And that means positability in the I)."(Ibid.).

The passage from non-being to being is the return to the condition of possibility of logical objectiveness: this return is possible inasmuch existence forces us to deal with the original opposition, in the attempt to re-comprehend being from the starting point of non-being, which in turn presupposes a conformity in the I. This conformity is the primeval datum of the fundamental relation between two opposed terms. According to Schelling the condition of possibility for objectivity is not enough to determine factuality in its determination. Thus there is the need for a further synthesis that can mediate between reality and factuality[108].

To deal with the opposition means *to be within the opposition,* that is, *to be among things.* It means that we are in the realized, finite, temporal not-I in the infinite effort to comprehend absolute being. The *Zwischen* means that we necessarily are a synthesis of reality and possibility: we are existence *(Daseyn).* We exist in the sphere of factuality and temporal determination because we are the result of the synthesis realized by the I as absolute being. From the point of view of effectiveness (of the finite I) we exist striving to realize what is possible: from necessity to being from the finite I to the absolute I. Schelling writes: "For the absolute I there is no possibility, actuality (factuality), or necessity, since whatever the *absolute* I posits is

[108] SW I 223, OI 115. The table of all forms of modality that concludes Schelling's description of the synthesis is particularly relevant. The first scheme clarifies the terms of the possibility of the not-I, that is, the absolute reality of opposition: THESIS: Absolute being absolute positability in and by the I: ANTITHESIS: Absolute not-being and absolute nonpositability determinable only in contrast to the I; SYNTHESIS: Conditional positability or objective-logical possibility of the not-I to become object only by absorption into the I=conformity with synthesis as such=temporal existence as such. The result of this synthesis becomes in turn the thesis of the second scheme. THESIS: Conditioning through synthesis as such through objective-logical possibility=existence in time as such; ANTITHESIS: Objective conditioning, existence in a particular synthesis, in time=factuality; SYNTHESIS: Conditioning of being-posited and determined by the object, by being posited and determined by the I in the synthesis as such=existence *(Daseyn)* in all synthesis (SW I 225-227, OI 116-117).

determined by the mere form of pure being. For the finite I, however, in theoretical and practical use, there are possibility, actuality (factuality) and necessity. And since the highest synthesis of theoretical and practical philosophy is the combination of possibility with actuality (factuality), that is, necessity, this combination can be termed the genuine task of all striving, though not its ultimate goal. If there were any possibility and actuality (factuality) at all for the nonfinite I, all possibility would be actuality (factuality) and all actuality (factuality) possibility. For the finite I, however, there is possibility and actuality (factuality). Therefore, in regard to the two, its striving must be determined in the way in which the being of the nonfinite I would be determined if it had anything to do with possibility and actuality (factuality). Thus the finite I *ought to strive* to make actual everything that is possible in it, and to make possible whatever is actual (factual). There is an imperative *(Sollen)* only for the finite I, meaning that there are practical possibility, actuality (factuality) and necessity because the action of the finite I is not conditioned only by the mere thesis (law of absolute being) but also by antithesis (natural law of finiteness) and by synthesis (moral ought)." (SW I 232, OI 120).

The philosophical quest moves from the comprehension of the relation between actuality/factuality and objectivity/reality) towards the being of the absolute positability, which is absolute posited being. The word *Zwischen* indicates our position, across being and existence, absolute and necessity. In this finite condition man regains the essence of life going back to the infinite. According to Schelling, this immanent philosophy can avoid the theoretical reefs of dogmatism and criticism, aiming at identifying the ethical essence of existence. From the point of view of existence, the unconditional is not the absolute I, but the condition of being between absolute and finiteness, of being in the opposition, the original separation of two terms that, belong to each other in an inseparable togetherness.

These are the new developments in Schelling's thought in the crucial year of 1795. Philosophy, in order to achieve these results, must move on from its empirical inquiries to a proper ontological quest. In order to build an ontology, and to comprehend the values of the synthesis, this immanent philosophy must begin investigating factuality (existential propositions), and pressing on to the logical and objective possibilities of thought (problematic propositions), in order to arrive to the intuition of pure being in its pure possibility (the fundament of every knowledge of the essential proposition). This movement shows the striving of reason to posit the not-I *because* it is posited, that is, the striving to elevate the not-I to unconditionality.

6. Freedom at Last.

In his Vom Ich Schelling expounds the opposition between the unconditional (absolute I) and the conditional (finite I), and he dangles continuously between the two points of view; this oscillation helps him to state the reciprocal co-belonging of the two terms of the opposition, event though only the I enjoys an absolute position: the position of the not-I remains within the I as its own self-posited opposition.

From the point of view of philosophy (the finite approach of the infinite) we necessarily exist within opposition. Intellectual intuition can seize, re-comprehend and reaffirm the I through the fundamental existential condition of the finite I, which exists to strive morally toward the absolute. The unveiling of the unconditional (the absolute I) is possible only if the absolute I is seized in its essential relation with the conditional (the finite I). The I, in its stepping out of itself and communicating its form is related to the not-I to the beginning, and the not-I is precisely the sphere within which the finite I acts. Being is not in itself anymore, but related to what became a necessity: the synthesis of logical and objective possibility and reality. The consequences are the manifestation of the limitation of the I within itself and the affirmation of the opposition. For the finite I this opposition is the authentic condition of existence that must be realized again through the synthesis.

This authentic condition is the unconditional, that must be thought by a transcendental (immanent) philosophy. This philosophy, begins from the situation of opposition, and infinitely strives towards the point of view of the absolute: this task is unrealizable but nevertheless constantly *in fieri.* Thus the absolute I is in the opposition not as an absolute ens, but as an ideal exceeding actual reality, a challenging task that every finite I must accept and undertake in order to realize itself.

The difference (and the relation) between the absolute I and the finite I are conclusively defined in the difference between absolute freedom and transcendental freedom: "previously (§ VIII) I predicated absolute freedom of the absolute I, that is, a freedom which is based only on its own being and which it has only inasmuch as it is simply I, excluding in its very origin all not-I. [...] An absolute I that excludes all not-I has absolute freedom in that very respect" (SW I 234, OI 121-122).

Schelling identifies this absolute freedom with absolute causality and with the law of nature. The I initially excludes every not-I, inasmuch this exclusion is the unconditional position of its being. The first act accomplished by absolute freedom was the stepping out of the I from itself and the subsequent opposition of the not-I, leading to the opposition between the pure I and the empirically conditioned I.

On this ground Schelling redefines the entire task of theoretical and practical philosophy. The empirical I exists only in its objective relation with the world: thus it possesses a freedom unable to realize itself. Nevertheless the empirical I responds to an infinite task: "The freedom of the absolute I is by itself and is absolutely nonfinite, but the freedom of the empirical I is empirically infinite, because to produce an absolute reality is an empirically infinite task. The freedom of the absolute I is absolutely immanent, for it is only inasmuch as the I is pure I and is under no necessity to step out of itself. The freedom of the empirical I is determinable only as *transcendental* freedom, that is, as a freedom which is actual only in relation to objects, although not *through* them." (Ibid.).

The existence of the empirical I is determined by objects: what is the sense of its freedom? Schelling writes: "The empirical I exists only with and through objects. But objects alone could never produce an I. The empirical I owes the fact that it is empirical to objects [...]. The empirical I is I owing to the same causality through which the absolute I is I. It owes nothing to the objects except its limitations and the finiteness of its own causality." (SW I 236, OI 123). The finite I, in all its limitations, and in its exile from the immanent condition of unity and identity with being, must go beyond the theoretical relation with objectivity. We must recognize the impotence of theoretical philosophy to unveil causality (this idea was already clearly stated by Kant) and seek a non-theoretical comprehension of the fundamental relation between the finite I, necessity and absolute freedom.

Schelling relies on the fact that the finite (even though the objects are the limits and the finiteness of its causality) is nonetheless an I, whose causality, according to quality, is identical to the causality of the absolute I. This causality can be posited in the I "[...] only *imperatively,* by a law which demands the negation of all objects, that is, demands absolute freedom." (SW I 238, OI 124).

Thus the concordance of absolute freedom and transcendental freedom is the negation of all objects *(Objeckte).* In the absolute I nothingness was counterposited to its unity: in the finite I causality is realizable by the exigency of identity with the infinite felt by the finite I. The negation of all objects, even if not absolute, is an exigency that must be produced empirically and is necessary in order to achieve the harmony between absolute freedom and transcendental freedom, moral causality and natural causality (SW I 239, OI 125). It is a return to the natural condition of freedom and to its relation of immediacy between thought and action. The goal is to reestablish the immanent principle of pre-established harmony in which freedom and nature are identical (SW I 241, OI 126). Pure happiness stems from the not-I identifying itself in the absolute I. The finite I, limited by objects, must broaden itself, turning its transcendental freedom into

absolute freedom. Through this broadening the finite I shall be able to remain a finite and empirical I and to get closer to the reality of the absolute I, and to the immanent condition of the opposition between being and existence.

The identification of the finite I and of the absolute I implies the annihilation of every determination of undetermined unity. If the finite I is removed, also the object is removed. The supreme connection is re-composed in a non-sensible intuition. This is the infinite task of the finite I within the horizon of finiteness created by the primeval opposition. In this infinite striving, reason leaves behind every theoretical pretense, aiming at a vision funded on the ontological level of existence. The opposition produced by the communicative opening by being (a division of immanence) becomes from the finite point of view, the fundamental situation (existence) and the striving of the finite I aiming at finding again the principle of unity-difference that is the constitutive element of immanent unity for the absolute, while it is the regulative principle of objective unity which ought to become immanent (SWI 242, OI 127).

The imperative: *be absolutely identical with yourself*! indicates man's supreme effort to produce in the world what in the Infinite is immediately real: the immanent, unconditional (and therefore non-objective), *ab-solutum* being that belongs to the other term of the opposition that in turn demands a task based on the decision of each one of us.

Chapter 5

THE DRAMATIZATION OF CONTRAST
THE PHILOSOPHICAL LETTERS (1795-1796)

1. The Radical Contrast.

In this period Schelling develops and elaborates his ideas with astounding readiness and speed. In 1795 Schelling seized the opportunity represented by the invitation to publish his writings on the Journal directed by Niethammer *(Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten),* and began to write an epistolary with an imaginary friend, to whom he presented the results of his research. While he was writing his *Philosophische Briefe Über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus,* Schelling met Hölderlin in Nürtingen. The developing relationship and the sodality between the two young intellectuals, was about to lead to their common elaboration of the *Ältestes Systemprogramm*[109].

In Schelling's *Philosophical Letters* the philosophical questions of his first writings are radicalized, and his program for the renewal of philosophy is proposed within the context of the dualism between dogmatism and criticism. The *Letters* also present a new element of Schelling's reflection: the aesthetic question. The opposition between the I and the not-I, unconditional and conditional becomes a dissension. Schelling chooses the metaphorical and mythical image of the breakup of absolute unity, its stepping out of itself, the immediate fall and the subsequent process of formation and production of finiteness. This dissension is an opposition between two co-belonging and co-original terms, that are possible insofar

[109] *Philosophische Briefe Über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* in SW I, 281-341. *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism,* in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge. Four Early Essays (1794-1796).* Trans. Into English by Fritz Marti (London-Cranbury: Associated Presses, 1980), 156-218 (PL).

they are *Trennung*. Man's ethical exigency to become identical with himself is placed within this dissension. The background of this process is the dissension between the absolute I and the finite I, and between the originality of the unconditional and the temporality of the transcendental subject. In Schelling's first letter the novelty is represented by the fact that this realization, conceiving opposition as a conflict, is inscribed within the sphere of a further aesthetical attitude that had never been explicitly mentioned before.

The aesthetic attitude emanates from Schelling's criticism against dogmatism, that is, against the tendency to consider the world as an object. Dogmatism believes that the conflict can be solved only if man abandons his own theoretical self-affirmation, nurturing sentiments of renunciation and abandonment *(Hingabe)* to the absolute. The aesthetic attitude of dogmatism disregards alertness and activity, and privileges and encourages idle contemplation *(stille Anschauung)* and submission *(Unterwerfung),* as the highest form of life (SW I, 284-285; PL 156-157).

From the point of view of dogmatism (according to which the world is absolute objectiveness, i.e., realized not-I), the question has two aspects: how do we relate ourselves and our subjectivity to objectiveness, once we have recognized this objectiveness to be the only and true absolute? How do we solve the *aenigma mundi*? What is the origin of finiteness as the absolute stepping out of itself and the subsequent domain of experience? To answer this questions dogmatism must abandon the possibility to solve the dissension theoretically: the contrast evaporates, and all that is left is the sentiment of abandonment and passivity: the reproachable aesthetic tendency to dissolve and annihilate itself in the world. According to Schelling dogmatism develops its principle (which is not purely aesthetical) anesthetizing "his thirst for life and existence as such", neutralizing every active participation in the contrast. Objectivity becomes the infinite sphere of existence. The abdication of the *Selbstmacht,* the force that makes the infinite ethical progress possible, annihilates the autonomy of the I, allowing the world to be identified in the totality of the opposition, which is therefore seen only from one side, the side of the not-I. With the vanishing of action and freedom, absolute objectivity loses its structural opponent and antagonist, and it is eventually annihilated: it has lost what could comprehend itself in its objectiveness.

However the principle underlying the aesthetic attitude of dogmatism (the "quite abandonment to the immeasurable") is not the proper principle of aesthetics. Contemplation is not enough to answer the question implied by the co-original and reciprocal belonging of the unconditional and of the conditional; and it is also not enough to answer the question of the relation between subject and object within the paradigm of critical philosophy. We

are not, in our opposition to the absolute, something that simply vanishes when confronted by its own unconditional opposition; nor the absolute is an object or a localization placed beyond the coordinates of space and time, that we should seize with a mystical leap. The opposition is determined by both its terms. Thus we are the protagonists of a struggle *(Kampf)* with the absolute, a struggle that is the essence of our existence *(Daseyn)*. The highest moment of man's self-assertion consists in his being within experience, and in Schelling's words, in his being within conditioned reality. Man lives on the fundament of freedom.

The question of man's destination and determination *(Bestimmung),* in his relation with himself and with an ethical and moral God (the keeper of absolute causality who cannot be known by theoretical reason), arises from our own opposition to the world. Dogmatism thinks God as a limit, and an intermediary between man and the world: this idea destroys man's original intuition of his co-belonging to the opposition: "The farther the world is from me, and the more I put between it and myself, the more my *intuition* of it becomes restricted and less possible is that abandonment to the world, that mutual approach, that reciprocal yielding in contest which is the proper principle of beauty. True art, or rather, the divine in art, is an inward principle that creates its own material from within and all-powerfully opposes any sheer mechanism, any aggregation of stuff from the outside lacking inner order." (SW I, 285; PL 157).

We cannot understand the true aesthetic principle through abandonment, but only through the reciprocal succumbing of the two terms of the opposition, in a perfect identification and correspondence of freedom and necessity. This point must be understood in the inseparable articulation of determination and existence, in the vision of the incomprehensible, and in the production of the I in the object and of the object in the I. If we fail to understand the common root of dogmatism and criticism, we'll lose the internal principle of production and formation: "simultaneously with the intellectual intuition of the world, and intuition which arise in us by means of an instantaneous unification of two opposing principles and is lost when neither the contest nor the unification is any longer possible in us." (Ibid.)[110].

The reasons of this struggle and of this union (the new words used by Schelling to indicate opposition after the recognition of the radicalization of the co-originality of the unconditional and of the conditional) ought to be

[110] Hölderlin shall call this internal principle *die reine Innigkeit* (pure interiority), conceived as the "la non extériorité de toutes choses par rapport à tout"; F. Dastur, *Hölderlin. Tragédie et Modernité* (La Versanne: Encre Marine, 1992). See Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 4.1, 149-162.

found by overcoming the limits of criticism. Schelling's second letter underlines that the tragic vision of the struggle excludes a moral God who can reunite the original contrast. Everything takes place within finiteness, the battlefield of separation. The absolute position of the opposition cannot be removed by anything, and philosophy must shift from metaphysics to criticism. Finiteness demands a reflection about the statute of the finite I, that is, the finite subjectivity that stands upon the ground of the absolute subject[111].

This reorganization of Kant's criticism based on the preeminence of practical philosophy rejects all the misinterpretations of the pseudo-Kantian philosophers in Tübingen. This project is aimed at directing Kant's genuine criticism towards the research of the fundament of the original essence of man, in order to find a point of convergence and an harmonization with the dogmatic approach: "My friend, the fight against dogmatism is waged with weak weapons if criticism rests its whole system merely upon the state of our *cognitive faculty,* and not upon our genuine essence." (SW I, 290; PL 161).

In order to fully understand the tragic condition produced by the dissension, it is necessary to summarize once again the characteristics of the dualism between dogmatism and criticism. In his third letter Schelling is really clear: "if we had had to deal with the absolute alone, the strife of different systems would never have arisen." (SW I, 293; PL 163). According to Schelling, if we were in the condition of immediacy in our relation with the absolute, namely in Eden, there wouldn't be any dominion of the object or of the subject, because they wouldn't exist at all. There would be no separation, no contrast, and we would be one with the absolute, and included with no contrast within the Unitotality. "Only as we come forth from the absolute does opposition to it originate, and only through this *original* opposition in the human does any opposition between philosophers

[111] This is J.-F. Courtine's idea when he questions the modality of the transition from the alternative to dogmatism and criticism to the possibility of the realization of the infinite task of the finite I. "On peut se demander pourtant si l'alternative entre dogmatisme et criticisme présenté en ces termes, permet encore de rendre justice á la puissance de l'objectif (du monde objectif); si l'effort pour réaliser en soi-même l'absolu par une activité illimitée ne conduit pas á dépouiller l'objet de toute consistance, á lui faire perdre son statut essentiel de *Widerstand*; et si, á l'inverse l'abandon de soi au monde, l'aspiration empédocléenne á se jeter 'dans le bras de l'infinité' et á se perdre dan le 'monde juvénile' ne represente pas, pour la puissance objective, un triomphe illusoire, puisque, si l'objectif l'emporte grâce á la passivité sans mesure du sujet, il n'en doit pas moins la réalité de sa victoire au sujet lui-même pour autant que celui-ci en se désappropriant, s'abandonne et renonce á soi". J.-F. Courtine, *Extase de la Raison* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 88.

originate." (Ibid.). Mere opposition has become a counter-opposition with direct effects on man's philosophical quest: "He, therefore, who intends to close the controversy *(Streit)* between the *philosophers* must proceed from the very point from which the controversy of philosophy itself proceeded, or, what amounts to the same thing, from the point from which the *original* opposition in the human mind proceeded. This point, however, is nothing but the *egress from the absolute (heraustreten aus dem Absoluten).* For, if we had never left its sphere we should all agree about the absolute, and if we had never stepped out from it, we would have no other field to dispute." (Ibid.).

The philosophical contrast between dogmatism and criticism, between absolute object and original subject, is the transposition *(Übertragen)* of the original opposition between the unconditional I (which absolutely posits itself through itself) and the conditional not-I (which is posited as opposite by the unconditional). Separation, opposition, *Trennung* are caused by the opening of absolute unity and by the stepping out of absolute. The movement of production *(her-vor-bringen),* that is, the imparting of form, begins from within the originally informal and unarticulated matter that realizes the original contrast by becoming object. This dynamics is also present in man's Geist: it is an internal contrast that becomes an external contrast, and that it is shaped by man's struggle against himself (his finiteness) and against the world (the receptacle of finiteness).

We think and we become the absolute unity and identity starting from our condition within the unconditional opposition, which is realm of experience: this is what it means *to be and to stay within multiplicity.* This asymptotical reciprocal conformity between thought and action takes place on the background of the question formulated in Schelling's Vom Ich, that is, the question of synthesis. In his *Letters,* Schelling asks the same question again, but inverting its terms. In the *Vom Ich* the question was "How is it possible for the absolute I to step out of itself and oppose to itself the not-I?". In the Letters the question is: "how did he ever come to judge synthetically? [...] How do I ever come to egress from the absolute, and to progress toward an opposite?". In the *Vom Ich* the question started from the unconditional I in order to understand the condition of possibility of the empirical realm and the reality of the negative. In the *Briefe* the question is asked from the point of view of the finite I, in order to understand how the finite I (produced by the absolute I) is posited in opposition to the absolute I itself.

This new formulation of the question on the synthesis from the point of view of the finite I, indicates that Schelling has already elaborated his philosophical and critical program within the sphere of realized finiteness, i.e., of existence. The finite I opposes itself to the absolute I and thus becomes a term in opposition to the absolute I. Thus, the essence of the finite

I, which is now a term of the opposition, can be conceived as co-original to the absolute I. Opposition is nothing but the absolute in its necessary relation with finiteness. The comprehension of the opposition, the comprehension of the dynamics through which the absolute steps out of itself and the comprehension of the dynamics of the return of the finite I to the absolute are one an the same. "*Synthesis* comes about only through the manifold's opposition to the original unity. For without opposition no synthesis in necessary; where there is no manifold there is absolute unity. On the other hand, if the manifold were original, then again there would be no synthesis. Now, though we can comprehend synthesis only as an *original* unity in opposition to plurality, yet it was impossible for the *Critique of Pure Reason* to ascend to that absolute unity because, in order to close the controversy between philosophers, it could proceed only from the fact from which the controversy of *philosophy* itself proceeds." (SW I, 294; PL 164)[112].

The value of the finite I and of the human predicament limits the absoluteness of the not-I and the presuppositions of dogmatism: the finiteness of existence, founded on the opposition deprives the object of its absolute character. Synthesis is possible only if there is opposition between multiplicity and original unity. Synthesis is something more than the reduction of the subject to an object, but a free and necessary dynamics grounded upon the essential principle: the original co-belonging of the two terms on the level of reality.

Criticism itself shows its own limits, and cannot explain the terms of the opposition. From its point of view the subject steps out of itself (or egresses from itself), in order to know the object and the sphere of objectiveness. This excludes every possible absolute knowledge of the object, because the object is knowable only under the condition of the subject that operates the synthesis. Since "in no synthesis can the object be met with as absolute" (SW I, 296; PL 165) there are two preliminary conditions for the synthesis in general: "First, that it [the synthesis] be *preceded* by an *absolute* unity, which becomes an *empirical* unity in the synthesis itself, that is, only if an opposite is given, a manifold [...] Second, no synthesis is thinkable except under the presupposition that it *terminate* in an *absolute thesis; the purpose of any synthesis is a thesis.*" (SW I, 296-297; PL 165).

These conditions were already determined in Schelling's *Über die Möglichkeit,* but in the Letters theoretical reason, even if capable of thinking

[112] There is an interesting affinity with Hölderlin's poem *Lebenslauf*: "Hoch auf strebte mein Geist, aber die Liebe zog/ Schön ihn nieder; das Leid beugt ihn gewaltiger;/ So durchlauf ich des Lebens/ Bogen und kehre, woher ich kam" F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd. 1.1, 247. There is also a clear allusion to Eraclitus' fragment n. 60.

the unconditional, cannot reach it, and must rely on the endeavor accomplished by the synthesis from the practical point of view. In order to achieve this synthesis, and to reach (practically) the unconditional, the conditions for the synthesis itself (the opposition between dogmatism and criticism, absolute I and absolute object, and, more definitely, the opposition between subject and object) must be removed. Schelling underlines that "if the opposition between subject and object is to cease, it ought to become unnecessary for the subject to step out of itself; both must become absolute, that is, the synthesis would terminate in a thesis." The two terms must not be removed: otherwise one of them would become absolute: "If, on the one hand, the subject were to disappear in the object, then, and only then, would the object be posited under no condition of the subject's, that is, it would be posited as *thing in itself,* as absolute; but the subject would be absolutely done away with it as knower. On the other hand, if the object became identical with the subject, then this would become *subject in itself,* absolute subject, while the object would be absolutely done away with *as what is knowable,* that is, as object properly understood." (SW I, 298; PL 166-167).

The two terms must become a unity: opposition shall be eventually overcome in a reconciliation *(Vereinigung).* Opposition is the starting point for the synthesis, which is not logical and theoretical synthesis, but a practical synthesis, infinitely realizing the identity of subject and object. This identity can be achieved through action, and through a struggle that eliminates the contrast trough the simultaneous succumbing of the two antagonists: "Theoretical reason *necessarily* seeks what is not conditioned; having formed the idea of the unconditioned, and, as *theoretical* reason, being unable to realize the unconditioned, it therefore demands the act *(Handlung)* through which it ought to be realized. Here, then philosophy proceeds to the realm of *demands,* that is, to the domain of *practical* philosophy, and only there can the decisive victory be gained – by the principle which we put at the beginning of philosophy, and which would be dispensable for theoretical philosophy if the latter could constitute a separate domain." (SW I, 299; PL 167).

2. *The Identity-Difference of Freedom and Necessity.*

The overcoming of the *Widerstreit* is possible only through the final mediation between dogmatism (the philosophy of the not-I, that is, objective realism) and criticism (philosophy of the I, that is, subjective realism). Schelling aims at creating a philosophy capable of overcoming the opposition: a philosophy of unity in multiplicity of unconditional and conditional. This program also aims at a system of idealism (a critical and idealistic philosophy) capable of deducing from its own premises the two

contrasting system in order to annihilate them. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* deducing the necessity of the practical postulates of the general idea of system, paved the way for the realization of Schelling's ambitious project. Thus the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the canon of all the possible systems. Most importantly, it is an interrogation elaborated from within the experience of each one of us. Schelling's goal is not a knowledge or a science, but a system that "must *obtain* reality, not by a theoretical but by a practical faculty; not by cognitive faculty but by *productive* realization; not by *knowledge (Wissen)* but by *action (Handeln).*" (SW I, 305; PL 171).

The practical basis of Schelling's philosophy is also revealed and confirmed by an important consideration in the young philosopher's Sixth Letter: "Which of the two we choose depends on the freedom of spirit which we have ourselves acquired. We must be what we call ourselves theoretically. And nothing can convince us of being that, except our very *endeavor (Streben)* to be just that. This endeavor brings to pass our knowledge of ourselves, and thus this knowledge becomes the pure product of our freedom. We ourselves must have worked our way up to the point from which we want to start. Man cannot get there by arguing, nor can others argue him up to that point." (SW I, 308; PL 173).

Thus we stand on the ground of our own freedom. Through the *Streben* we have the possibility to realize the unconditional that from the theoretical point of view can be only thought. In order to realize the unconditional we must infinitely strive and endeavor towards the sphere in which we already are, and from which we begin our journey, i.e., the opposition, the contrast, the struggle, the dissension, the exile from the sphere from which we fell into the realm of experience[113]. Freedom, the fundament of our being and action, is the modality with which we are placed within the contrast[114]. Freedom allows us to realize practically what we have thought theoretically, and that no *hinausvernünfteln* can comprehend. This is possible because freedom is our way to dwell within the fracture: this fracture can be overcome through what freedom makes possible, that is, the endeavor *(Streben).* Thus we must realize practically what we originally were, and we are not anymore. The sphere of the absolute in which there is no struggle, nor fracture, and in which the only principle is that of identity and opening, the foundation of an immediate knowledge made of analytical propositions. *Freedom, which is the condition of possibility for action, striving and*

[113] F. Dastur writes: "l'entre-deux du ciel et de la terre apparit comme la dimension á l'intérieur de laquelle l'être humain est requis d'établir son séjour" F. Dastur, *Hölderlin. Tragédie et modernité,* op. cit, 71.

[114] On the concept of property *(Eigentum)* see M. Heidegger, *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit,* (Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1971), 10-11.

endeavor (infinitely unrealizable but nevertheless necessary), is man's foundation and ultimate source.

In his Sixth Letter Schelling repeats the radical preliminary question of critical philosophy. The philosopher, from within the sphere of experience, asks the ultimate question about the world of experience itself: *how* and *why* is this world possible? There are no purely theoretical answers to this basic question.

Criticism, in order to be re-organized according to the new critical and idealistic principles, must cease to think subjectivity as an absolute element, and must reflect on the general possibility of experience, which is the ambit from within which transcendental reflection itself begins. Philosophy must provide explanations strictly based on our conditions. Thus there's a need for an immanent philosophy affirming the necessity of the empirical world and of existence. Both terms of the opposition must be considered. Schelling aims at comprehending the absolute and the unconditional only *through* the empirical and existential conditional. This philosophical journey consists in the repetition of the dynamics of the absolute through the synthesis of the I. Once again Schelling's words are clear: "I ask again, why is there a realm of experience at all? Every reply I give to this already presupposes the existence of a world of experience. In order to be able to answer this question we should first of all have to have left the realm of experience; but if we had left that realm the very question would cease." (SW I, 311; PL 175).

We are within the finite in a paradoxical modality: in order to answer the question about the possibility of experience we should be able to place ourselves outside experience itself. This is clearly impossible, but even if it was possible, the question would then had ceased to have any meaning: "Hence it [the question] is absolutely unanswerable, because it can be answered only in such a way that I can never be again asked." (Ibid.).

To get out of experience is a paradoxical necessity; it is neither an exigency of theoretical reason, nor the desire to conceive what is unconceivable: it is an identical and opposite operation to the operation accomplished by the absolute stepping out of itself. The absolute steps out of itself positing a limit, and through this positing, it confirms its own absoluteness as a program which can be realized practically. The need to step out of experience is a spontaneous tension, and in order to remove the limits of the world of experience I must cease to be a finite being. The theoretical question is cast aside in order to purse a practical quest. I cannot get out of experience through an "objective" concept, nor through a determined knowledge, because the result of the separation is the distinction between theoretical and conceptual knowledge and ecstatic and intuitive comprehension. The identity between these two elements can be found only

in the original unity; after the opposition has taken place these two elements remain separated and can be unified only transcendentally. The only way to re-compose the dissension in the unity of the unconditional is the repetition of the original opening of the absolute: this repetition is the only answer to the necessity *(Forderung)* stemming from our position within the world of finite experience. This answer consists in removing the limits of experience, questioning them with the ultimate goal of an infinite connection, which is realizable through a union of art and life: "And thus the problem necessarily leads me beyond all bounds of *knowledge* into the region where I do not find firm ground, but must *produce* it myself in order to stand firmly upon it." (Ibid.)[115].

Reason, rather than soaring toward fantastic and chimerical heights turns itself: "from a merely cognitive [reason] [...] into a *creative* reason, from a theoretical reason into practical [reason]"(Ibid.). The endeavor to overcome the opposition, which is the struggle aiming at the destruction the limits of the conditional and at the annihilation of finiteness, is also the only way to proceed in our journey from existence to essence. "It is significant enough that even language has distinguished very precisely between the *actual (Wirklisches)* (that which is present in sensation, that which acts upon me and upon which I react), the *existing (Daseyendes)* (that which is there at all, i.e., in space and time), and the *being (Seyendes)* (which is by itself, absolutely independent of all temporal conditions)." (SW I, 309; PL 174)[116].

In the opposition freedom establishes itself as principle and impulse of the endeavor to overcome the opposition. Every overcoming is not the mere return to the origin but its repetition and re-enactment that can be realized only as the production of what was originally One. In the age of finiteness and separation the original oneness can be thought of by theoretical speculation and realized by aesthetical and practical branches of philosophy. This repetition, that is, man's moral development, can be realized only within finiteness, which is the field of the history of freedom and

[115] On the question of the *Wiederholung* see *Über Religion,* F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke,* op. cit., Bd, 41.1, 275-281. See also F. Dastur, *Hölderlin, Tragédie et modernité,* op. cit., 77-70.

[116] M. Vetö points out that Schelling always opposes being (position in general) and being in itself (position of itself) as the two fundamental categories of position: one is a posited position (position posée), the other is a positing position ("position qui se sait comme posante"). See M. Vetö, *The fondement selon Schelling,* op. cit., 93. There is a specific analogy with Hölderlin's Empedocles, in which the dimension of the annihilation of reality takes place through Empedocles' death, which represents the speculative suicide that realizes the aspiration to overcome finiteness. This implies the opposition between art and nature, that fulfills the reconciliation of the human and divine elements in the sphere of total sentiment.

temporality. This conception is the direct result of Schelling's interpretation of the myths concerning the origin of the *Cosmos* and man's fall[117].

The impossibility of a transition from the infinite to the finite (even if addressed by Spinoza's principle of immanence) remains an irresolvable and yet fundamental philosophical problem. It is impossible to see the possibility of the transition *(Übergang)* from the not-objective immutable and self-positing element to the posited mutable element, from the point of view of the infinite-unconditional. The idea of an immanent Unitotality (derived from Spinoza's philosophy), which comprehends the totality of causes and effects, cannot provide an explanation for the problem of the existence of the world, realized through the original transition. The gap between the infinite and the finite cannot be bridged by any system. It is impossible to be, to think and to act within the infinite: "there shall be no transition from the nonfinite to the finite." (SW I, 314; PL 177). This transition cannot be realized by reason through a mere system of ideas. Nevertheless, Schelling indicates the possible solution to this paradoxical situation: "Philosophy cannot make a transition from the nonfinite to the finite, but it can make one from finite to the nonfinite." (SW, 314; PL 178).

Man's practical endeavor (the radical belonging to finiteness) unveils man's ineluctable tendency towards the infinite. Art shall realize this eternal endeavor through which man faces his situation of fracture and dissension (SW I, 314; PL 177). This tendency arises within the finite and answers the call of its own freedom (the principle of action) and necessity (the principle of existence). The goal is not to bridge the gap between the two opposites, but to become the identity of infinite and finite: this identity can be realized because the I (being an I) belongs essentially to the original unconditional source. This subject belongs to the absolute (the I described in the *Vom Ich*) just as the absolute belongs to the subject. This situation manifests itself through endeavor (that is, the activity of the ethical subject in its strive to become identical) and abandonment (that is, the passivity in relation to absolute causality). This abandonment is not the abandonment proposed by

[117] F. Dastur writes about Hölderlin what we could say about Schelling: "[...] ce qui implique pour l'homme une essentielle non coincidence avec lui- même et une impossibilité de jamais se réinstaller dans sa situation initiale". This is something that only tragic art can propose in concrete terms. F. Dastur, *Hölderlin, Tragédie et modernité,* op. cit., 92. M. Vetö uses a specific image: "l'expérience comme forme propre de l'activité autonome sert á expliquer la genèse et le sens de l'histoire. L'homme a quitté par la chute, cet acte arbitraire, le royaume de l'instinct, le jardin d'Eden, pour entrer dans le monde de la liberté. C'est le commencement de l'Histoire que l'homme développe á travers ses luttes, ses misères et ses échecs, mais aussi par ses victoires", M. Vetö, *Le fondement selon Schelling,* op. cit., 144. It is clear that we are back to Schelling's first philosophical steps.

dogmatism: it is always accompanied by the endeavor towards the infinite. The infinite realization of the infinite is possible, from the point of view of the finite, only through a joint activity of *Streben* and *sich verlieren.* In his Eight Letter Schelling says "We all have a secret and wondrous capacity of withdrawing from temporal change into our innermost self, which we divest of every exterior accretion. There, in the form of immutability, we intuit the eternal in us." (SW I, 318; PL 180). The young philosopher then points out that the transition from the finite to the infinite is realized by the intuition that is "the innermost and in the strictest sense our own experience, upon which depends everything we know and believe of a supersensuous world." (Ibid.). This intuition can see the original opposition in itself.

This is not an objective intuition, but an immediate intuition, that represents the intuiting subject and the intuited object as one and the same thing: it is the product of the action of freedom. The result of this intuition is the realization of an accomplished aesthetics, in which the produced object (the work of art) represents the final detachment from a conception of mere abandonment to the world (criticized in Schelling's First Letter), and the emerging of the human modality of being in the world, aimed at the modification, realization and production of *exemplar* objects. This intellectual is the essential tool for the realization of the project of the destruction and annihilation of finiteness. Through intellectual intuition "I cease to be an object for myself", that is, our intuiting I becomes one with the intuited I, and we finally find the way that leads us back from the finite I (I think) to the absolute I (I am), and therefore to the very being of our I (SW I, 319; PL 181).

Intellectual intuition is the most immediate experience: it annihilates the separation, that is, the intrinsic autonomy of the terms of the opposition, and it sees their co-original belonging on the fundament of the I (the immanent condition of the opposition). Intellectual intuition intuits the opposition and annihilates it at the same time. In order to achieve this goal intellectual intuition doesn't have find an adequate concept for unconditional, nor it has to resist to the unconditional. This intuition returns to itself and dissolves the objectivity of the conditional, neutralizing every attempt to understand effectiveness in its reduction to an object. Thus this intuition doesn't provide any representation of the unconditional, but it shows the infinite possible horizon for moral action, opening the doors on the abyss that represents the highest aspect of being, that is, its transition to nonbeing (SW I, 324; PL 184). We remain on the boundary between the unconditional and the conditional, in which *unity and separation are thought in their reciprocal inhabitation without any concept.* At the same time we think of ourselves as within this wordl, from which we distance ourselves through the *Vernichtung.*

Once again, Schelling speculation resembles Hölderlin's reflections in his fragments. The exceeding element seized by the intellectual intuition appears to be, at the same time, both internal and, until we abandon this state of contemplation that resembles an apparent death: "We awaken from intellectual intuition as from a state of death. We awaken through reflection, that is, through a forced return to ourselves. But no return is thinkable without resistance, nor reflection without an object." (SW I, 325; PL 185). As beings placed within the opposition we must deal with a series of unavoidable paradoxes.

We strive to go back within ourselves, thus re-enacting the stepping out of the absolute I from itself in its determination of the finite I. To return to ourselves means to lose our contact with the empirical realm and from the conditional: but we cannot remain in this situation of detachment for very long. The call of finiteness (opposed to reflection) is inexorable. There are two tendencies (or inclinations) within us: a tendency towards the unconditional (the subject) and a tendency towards the conditional (the object). "Man ought to be neither lifeless nor merely alive. His activity is necessarily intent upon objects, but with equal necessity it returns to itself." (Ibid.). Man's inner struggle stems from the clash of these two conflicting necessities.

Dogmatism and criticism are two incomplete and complementary systems; they both try to negate the existence of this fundamental conflict. On the contrary, Schelling's critical and idealistic system aims at overcoming this conflict, and therefore it affirms it in the most radical terms: "There is the difference, though, that criticism is intent *immediately* upon absolute identity of the *subject,* and only mediately upon conformity of the object with the subject, while dogmatism is *immediately* intent upon the identity of an absolute *object,* and only mediately upon conformity of the subject with the absolute object." (SW O, 328; PL 187).

The limit of dogmatism is represented by the instant in which we are identical to the absolute, and in which the absolute has ceased to be an object opposed to our condition of finiteness. The limit of criticism is represented by the instant in which the object is annihilated in the subject, and in which the subject loses its own identity with itself. Dogmatism annihilates the conflict in absolute objectiveness, while criticism does so in the absoluteness of the subject, which cannot be considered "subjective" anymore. Schelling explains the paradoxical complementary correlation between dogmatism and criticism: "the absolute as such is not an object of realization. Realization stands under the condition of an opposite. Being without an opposite, the absolute is, simply *because* it is, and it needs no realization. If it is to be realized at all, this can be done only in the *negation* of the opposite. In this regard, the moral commandment is at once an affirmative and a negative

proposition, because it demands that I realize (affirm) the absolute by annulling (denying) an opposite." (SW 327; PL 187, footnote).

Schelling knows that in order to negate the opposite, a preliminary affirmation of the opposition is necessary. This preliminary affirmation is the fundament of the critical and idealistic system, aimed at affirming the absolute: it is action that affirms and realizes the absolute within the opposition. This is the reason why Schelling writes: "Yet realism, conceived in its perfection, necessarily and just because it is perfect realism, becomes idealism. For perfect realism comes to pass only where the objects cease to be objects, that is, appearances, opposed to the subject – in short, only where the representation is identical with the represented objects, hence where subject and object are absolutely identical." (SW I, 330; PL 188). The subjective representation of objects is absolutely identical to the objects themselves. The objects are not mere objects anymore, and the subject can contemplate itself as the divinity does. But we are not gods, nor divinities: we do not possess the realized identity of morality and happiness, i.e., of objective realism and subjective idealism, and of subjective realism and objective idealism. Nor we live peacefully on the fundament of identity of freedom and necessity. This is an identity that we must strive to realize, but that does not actually exist. We live within a paradoxical state of opposition, aiming at the practical realization of the unconditional that we have theoretically conceived.

Schelling's critical idealism proposes a mediation between the two systems. In order to be critical, criticism "must regard the ultimate goal merely as the object of an endless task. *Criticism itself necessarily turns into dogmatism as soon as it sets up the ultimate goal as realized (in an object), or as realizable (at any particular time).*" (SW I, 331; PL 189). The infiniteness of this task, made possible by freedom, requires the endeavor to realize the absolute, even though we know that this task shall never be fully accomplished. Freedom acts according to the internal necessity of the opposition (existence in its fracture and separation) and not to the internal necessity of the absolute. The necessity of freedom is the possibility of an incomplete realization of the absolute. Freedom takes the entire risk of this daring action within the horizon of finiteness and temporality. This is Schelling's solution of the contraposition between dogmatism and criticism, necessity and freedom, passivity and activity. In order to respond to the exigency for the absolute, we must freely set in motion the infinite endeavor to realize the absolute through and unlimited activity. This activity corresponds to the preliminary recognition of existence, which is the necessary element placed within the opposition, and which is free to strive and to endeavor in order to overcome this contrast. "In criticism, my vocation is to strive for immutable selfhood, unconditional freedom,

unlimited activity. Be! is the supreme demand of criticism." (SW I, 335; PL 192).

3. A Philosophy of the Tragic.

Schelling's Ninth Letter offered the key to unlock the endeavor towards the unconditional that characterizes finite existence, that is, freedom, but the problem of man's *Bestimmung* remained unresolved. Man's freedom which is not coincident with absolute causality, cannot achieve an absolute realization. Freedom, even if threatened by objective exteriority cannot completely annihilate the external totality. Thus freedom is inscribed within the sphere of the finite. Within this sphere freedom encounters the opposition of the objective world, against which fights its ultimate and desperate battle. This is the consequence of the state of finite I (absolute causality is determined in subjectivity) and of the realized not-I (the not I has become an object opposed to the subject).

Schelling immediately expounds the question: "one thing remains, to know that there is an objective power which threatens our freedom with annihilation, and, with this firm and certain conviction in our heart, to fight *against* it exerting our whole freedom, and thus to go down." (SW I, 336; PL 192). This struggle is the endeavor to overcome our own individuality, and to overcome the limits of our finiteness. The individual is the residue of nature, the emergency that shows nature's ends from within. Only the individual can challenge destiny. Pride is opposed to the realized not-I, aiming at its annihilation. The transition to nonbeing doesn't tolerate any compromise, and particularly any theoretical compromise. The objective world naturally threatens to destroy our freedom, and this threat pushes the endeavor for our own affirmation within opposition to its limits. Schelling believes that we cannot avoid the transcendental risk implicit in our existence: we cannot truly live within the sphere of finite experience without the endeavor to free ourselves from its grip and to defend ourselves from the pressure of objectiveness, which threatens to annihilate the opposition from the point of the view of the object, and to reduce us to a mere absolute objectivity[118].

Dogmatism must be dialectically mediated with criticism. Schelling believes that the relationship between the hero and destiny, as conceived by the tradition of Greek tragedy, must be scrutinized and reformulated. The Greek tradition conceived the opposition as a struggle between man and a

[118] On the concept of transcendental risk connected to the ethical duty of freedom see E. Garroni, *Estetica. Uno sguardo-attraverso* (Milano, Garzanti, 1992), 225.

superior fatality of the objective and mortal world. Man, from this point of view, after fighting desperately to affirm his own freedom, necessarily had to succumb. Man's defeat was also a punishment: the mortal hero was not only defeated, but punished for his attempt to affirm his own freedom. Nevertheless, the hero's death maintained and reaffirmed the presupposition of freedom. The Greek hero dies because he attempts to affirm freedom, and this, according to Schelling, means that freedom exists and acts, through the hero's actions: "Greek tragedy honored human freedom, letting its hero fight against the superior power of fate. In order not to go beyond the limits of art, the tragedy had to let him succumb. Nevertheless, in order to make restitution for this humiliation of human freedom extorted by art, it had to let him *atone* even for the crime committed by fate." (SW I, 336; PL 193).

Once again, Schelling presents a paradoxical scenario. The contradiction of freedom, that affirms itself through its own defeat explicitly shown in the Greek tragedy, is the result of man's existence within finiteness and temporality, after the fall and the oblivion of immediacy. Life itself, (which is ultimately unrealizable), and not only tragic art, is the battlefield of man's struggle to affirm his own freedom. Schelling believes that the struggle "is thinkable only for the purpose of tragic art", and cannot become a system of action (it would ultimately lead to the destruction of humanity). Schelling also affirmed that free action, which is peculiar and essential to man, aimed at its own unity and identity when casting aside theoretical speculation, envisions the invisible which cannot be represented and subsequently produces the representation as a *mise en scéne.*

Schelling wants to go through a very narrow gate: he wants to return to the finite experience through the unconditional, which continuously sends us back to experience and to its original co-opposed term. At the same time it is necessary to go back to the unconditional under the pressure of the conditional. According to Schelling, the Greek reason shows how both men and gods alike, within the sphere of nature, are under the incomprehensible dominion of fate. Fate is the ambit of the supernatural that was originally lost, and that causes the internal conflicts of conscience. "As long as man remains in the realm of nature he is *master* of nature, in the most proper sense of the world, just as he can be master of himself. He assigns to the objective world its definite limits beyond which it may not go. In *representing* the object to himself, in giving it form and consistency, he masters it. He has nothing to fear, for he himself has set limits to it. But as soon as he does away with these limits, as soon as the object is no longer representable, that is, as soon as he himself has strayed beyond the limit of representation, he finds himself lost. The terrors of the objective world befall him. He has done away with its bounds; how shall he now subdue it? He can no longer give distinct form to the boundless object. It is indistinctly present

to his mind. Where shall he bind it, where seize it, where put limits to its excessive power? […]. The Greek gods were still within nature. Their power was not *invisible,* not out of reach of human freedom. [...] But for the Greeks the supernatural realm begins with fate, the invisible power out of reach of every natural power, a power upon which even the immortal gods cannot prevail. The Greeks are all the more natural themselves, the more terrible we find them in the realm of the supernatural." (SW I, 337; PL 193).

Men and gods share the same destiny because they share the same aesthetic state, which Schelling defined, in his First Letter, as the pure and peaceful abandonment to the immensurable *(Übermacht).* This original condition allows the complete dominion of the supernatural fate on nature, to which both men and gods belong. The limits that man can impose to the world are removed[119]. Thus every activity, every contraposition, every affirmation of one's own position within the opposition, and every decision to responsibly assume the terms of the conflict, are rejected and made impossible. The abandonment to invisible forces leads to the oblivion of form and to the loss of the capability to impart a form to the world through freedom. The sensible horizon obscures every possibility to enlighten reality, and casts into darkness the human spirit, which is frightened, powerless and completely dominated by an abysmal *mysterium tremendum.* Only the active awakening of conscience, the transition from the purely sensible state to the state in which there is an harmony of the faculties makes the full assumption of responsibility possible that challenges the fracture between the positing and the posited.

Totality can become a world and I can become a man (even if in a state of perennial conflict and destined to defeat), only through the necessity to posit limits and to question them in the relation in which the unconditional and the conditional are in touch with each other and freely exchange their form. The unavoidability of this condition is the best proof of my identity with freedom, that is, of my emancipation from a state of passive childhood, and of my entrance in the world of men.

However, reason and the affirmation of freedom are not enough to avoid defeat and chastisement. The paradox of freedom, which is affirmed through the succumbing of the hero, remains untouched. Schelling's hero is not a martyr , and his defeat actually alters this world. The world and the hero must succumb together because the world, after the hero's death, necessarily

[119] This theme shows Schiller's *Über die Ästetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe* von Briefen on Schelling. See the 25th Letter to Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke,* Bd. IV (Darmstadt: WBG 1993), 651-655. See also X. Tilliettte, *Schelling, Une philosophie en devenir,* I, op. cit., 97-98, n30, 103 n44; F. Moiso, *Vita, natura libertà. Schelling, 1795-1809* (Milano: Mursia 1990), 136-144.

dissolves itself in its indifference and fulfilled self-affirmation. The transition from the finite to the infinite envisioned Schelling's *Vom Ich* is precisely the destruction of the world, while the subject, in its contingency and finiteness affirms his freedom and his subsequent rebellion against the world. Freedom cannot realize the final emancipation: the subject cannot be the original absolute capable of positing itself and its own opposition. The subject is not the absolute I, but a *possibility of realization,* within a perspective that must be re-comprehended by the system of the critical and idealistic philosophy.

The simultaneous dissolution of the hero and of the world realizes a re-composition of the opposition upon the abyss that encompasses subject and object, and that is the ultimate fundament of life. Tragic death is the result of reconciliation, that moves from the sphere of ethical action to the aesthetical level of the unity of the principles engaged in the opposition. This unity, through the simultaneous dissolution of the antagonist element engaged in this titanic struggle, makes possible for the intellectual intuition to see the forming process of matter from within. The self-affirmation of the I in its freedom and the position of the objective world cease to be opposed one against each other, annihilating a reflection conceived as a mere "return to ourselves". The terms of the opposition are mutually identified in their reciprocal annihilation, that is, in the *annihilation of the opposition.* Thus *Trennung* and *Untergang* are connected by an organic and vital relation *(intussusceptio)* that, from the point of view of the opposition is the *Vernichtung* of the opposition, and the transition to nonbeing (which is non-objective and non-temporal being) (SW I, 324; PL 184)[120].

In the transition from the finite to the finite, the two extremes (the absolute subject and the absolute object) coincide and lose their opposition. The absolute is neither subjectivity nor objectivity. The two terms of the contrast find their conjunction in a problematic point: on the one hand there is the tendency and the inclination to lose themselves in the Unitotality and be a part of an absolute objectiveness; on the other there is the obstinate endeavor of self-affirmation, which is the result of the opening of the I and of the self-positing of the subject against the worldly element. Theoretical philosophy is impotent to meet the challenge represented by this contraposition, because it cannot represent the absolute in its becoming

[120] See Moiso's exhaustive synthesis: "this union of conflicting principles (intussusceptio) cannot be in time (as consciousness [...]) but must be instantaneous, it cannot maintain the tension of mediation, but it is the peace of the Untergang, the death of consciousness in its passage to real life: it is the intellectual intuition, whose ambit includes only the aesthetic state, in which the finalized action of man itself becomes the world", F. Moiso, *Vita, natura libertà. Schelling, 1795-1809,* op. cit., 143.

indifferent nonbeing through production. This would mean comprehending and representing the absolute in its annihilation of the contrast, that is, annihilation itself, and therefore nonbeing. The original separation would then be problematically represented: this is something that only art, which realizes and lives the non-objective element of the object, can do: "The ideas to which our speculation has risen cease to be objects of an idle occupation that tires our spirit all too soon; they become the law of our life, and, as they themselves change into life and existence, and become objects of experience, they free us forever from the painful enterprise of ascertaining their reality by way of speculation a priori." (SW I, 341; PL 196).

The aesthetic phase doesn't simply add art to philosophy, but allows the comprehension of the co-possibility of the terms of the opposition, starting from the opposition itself. The terms of the opposition manifest themselves in a series of diversified conflicting relation within the empirical sphere. The horizon of the original separation has become the horizon of the fracture of conscience between sensibility and intellect, that repeats the conflict between man and nature, the unconditional and the conditional, the supersensuous ideal and the empirical, the forming and the formed elements[121].

Thus aesthetics is ready to be the ambit through which is possible to reach and overcome the opposition. This opposition is man's condition, who has always been within experience. Tragedy is not simply a genre but the modality through which the opposition is incarnated by the action of the tragic hero, the test of the internal tension of the opposition: it is action that radically engages man in the conflict. The struggle against destiny is the sign of our revolt and rebellion. This revolt, that will never be fully accomplished, is nonetheless necessary. The struggle against destiny is identical to the realization of form. In this struggle, every man, and not only the tragic hero, in his attempt to overcome and comprehend the resisting objectiveness, test his limits and dies, returning to the totality of nature and

[121] See F. Moiso, *Vita, natura libertà. Schelling, 1795-1809,* op. cit., 164: "The philosophical result of Schelling's *Philosophische Briefe* was to block the way for an intervention of pure objectiveness of the thing in itself (unrelated to the subject, and therefore not directly accessible to human knowledge) within the ambit of freedom. Not only the intelligible world was coinciding with the phenomenal world, but –a decisive aspect for the entire development of the *Naturphilosophie*– the philosophical point of view didn't need anymore to posits itself as the insuperable fracture of the unity of object and representation –placing things outside of ourselves and presupposing them to be independent from our representations– and it could remain in the unity of intuition; the tracking of reality then took place as an inquiry of life by the living self-consciousness itself, so that the objects of speculation lost their character of pure a priori and became objects of philosophy and experience".

infinitely expanding his own internal limit. The aesthetic element arises from this struggle and this continuous risk as the exemplary moment of the comprehension of the opposition.

Aesthetics can comprehend the exceeding element of subject and object, which is the overcoming of the contras through their own dissolution. The subject that perishes in its struggle, and the object that is annihilated by the self-affirmation transform the fracture into a dynamics between form and the formless element, and between what has a meaning and what is meaningless. The nonobjective fundament of the opposition shall be shown by the aesthetic reflection and its realization within the *System.*

NOTE: THE ÄLTESTE SYSTEMPROGRAMM BETWEEN SCHELLING AND HÖLDERLIN

The relationship between Schelling and Hölderlin, that began in the classrooms of the Stift, continued throughout the fall of 1795 in Nörtingen and during the spring of 1796 in Stuttgart, where Hölderlin arrived as the family preceptor of Baron von Riedesel. These are the months of the elaboration of the Briefe and of the maturation of *the Älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*[122].

[122] The controversy about the attribution of the fragment found by Rosenzweig and published in 1917 (*Das Ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus,* Sitzungberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 1917, 5, 3, ff.) is well known. For the history of the fragment and the controversy see W. Bohem, *Hölderlin als Verfasser des "Ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus",* "Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte", 1926, 339-426; L. Strauss, *Hölderlins Anteil an Schellings Systemprogramm,* "Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte", 1927, 679-734; K. Schilling, *Natur und Wahrheit. Untersuchungen über Entstehung und Entwicklung des Schellingschen System bis 1800,* (München: Reinhardt, 1934); M. Schröster, *Ein Rückblick aus Schellings Mythologie,* "Zeitschrift füur Philosophische Forschung" XIV, 1960, 264-272; O. Pöggeler, *Hegel, der Verfasser des Ältesten Systemprogramms, des deutschen Idealismus,* "Hegel-Studien Beiheft", 4, 1969, 17-32; X Tilliette, *Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir,* op. cit., I, 112 ff.; R. Bubner (ed.), *"Das Ältestes Systemprogramm. Studien zur Frühgeschichte des deutschen Idealismus,* "Hegel-Studien Beiheft" 9,1973; M. Frank, G. Kurz (eds.), *Materialen zu Schellings philosophischen Anfängen* (Frankfurt a. M., 1975); W. Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätsphilosophie Identitätssystem* (Neske: Pfullingen, 1975); X Tilliette, *Schelling als Verfasser des Systemprogramms,* in Frank-Kurz, op. cit., M. Frank, *Der kommende Gott. Vorlsungen über die Neue Mythologie,* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1982); F. P. Hansen, *Das Ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus. Rezeptiongeschichte und Interpretation,* (Berlin-New York, NY: De Gruyter, 1989). We follow Rivelaygue's indications, according to which we should consider the text as an autonomous unity, that is, without trying to interpret it in its external relation to what we know about Hegel,

In Hölderlin's Briefe there are two points that resemble Schelling's theses. The first one is the transition from the metaphysics of the separation between representing subject and represented object to practical philosophy. This transition creates the possibility of the original co-belonging of the idea of an absolutely free self-consciousness and of an external world stemming coming out of nothingness. This non-theoretical knowledge allows the affirmation of the reality of the external and empirical world on the fundament of the idea of myself, that is, the absolutely free act of reason that demands the absolute within the opposition of the *Realität.* The free exigency of a world stepping out from a meaningless nothingness into the fundamental relation of opposition, leads to the necessity according to which the world must have a form, a meaning and a purpose[123]. Thus metaphysics coincides with the system of the ideas, that is, with all the practical postulates and all the pure exigencies of reason. The question of the external world ("why there is an external world?") is therefore reformulated: "how the world should be in order to be a moral world?"[124].

The realizations of the external natural and human world (Nature and State), must be related to freedom, because freedom is the principle of self-determination and self-positioning according to ends, and not according to the simplistic causal representations of the theoretical subject, i.e., theoretical and experimental physics and the *État-machine*[125]. The result of this transition transforms the not-I that becomes the very idea of nature: its correlative opposite term becomes organism and organization, in the ambit of a "great physics". This problem has a Kantian nature, and concerns the accord between nature and freedom as stated in the *Critique of Judgment.* Practical reason, in its relation to nature, acts positing the absolute in the finite, while striving for its realization. However, the unity of the theoretical and of the practical sphere removes and cuts off the sphere of sensibility that

Schelling and Hölderlin in this period: the text should be interpreted with an internal criticism, as a document concerning the philosophical debate of German idealism. See J. Rivelaygue, *Leçon de métaphysique allemande,* Tome I et Tome II, (Paris: Grasset, 1990), 211-255.

[123] Here we have some noteworthy analogies with the comment on Plato's *Timaeus,* particularly on the question concerning the imparting of form to the undetermined original substance.

[124] See the premises of this point in Fichte's *Grundlage des Naturrechts*: J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts,* in *Fichtes Werke,* hrsg. von I. Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971). Bd. III, Zur Rechts-und Sittenlehre I, 1-385; see also L. Pareyson, *Fichte. Il sistema della libertà* (Milano: Mursia, 1976), 221-261.

[125] See M. Frank, *Der kommende Gott. Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie,* op. cit., chapter VI.

we absolutely need as the indispensable element to proceed further and in our journey towards its highest level.

This journey is a repetition of the ideal original condition of immediacy that was broken by the advent of the original separation and by the subsequent separation of man's faculties that resulted in the division of philosophy itself into two separate ambits: theoretical and practical. This repetition requires one step back, we must consider once again the question concerning the conditions of possibility of knowledge. These conditions are not objects for speculation or representations, but exigencies of reason, and objects of our free will and free action. The transcendental philosophy of the I (that is, the philosophy that reaches the unconditional as absolute self-positing) is not enough to achieve this result: it is therefore necessary to re-think the dissension between the unconditional and the conditional as the relation between the idea of beauty and sensibility. This is the second transition from practical philosophy to aesthetics.

Finally there is the idea that unifies all the other idea, the idea of *beauty,* in the superior Platonic sense of the word. "I am certain that that the supreme act of reason, the act through which reason comprehends the totality of the ideas, is an aesthetic act and that truth and goodness are intimately combined only in beauty. Thus the philosopher must possess and aesthetic attitude, equaling that of the poet"[126]. Truth and goodness (theoretical and practical realm, dominion of the object and dominion of the subject)[127] are united in the idea of beauty. Knowledge and action converge in the moral law, expressed by the practical postulates, which also acquire the function of aesthetic propositions, because they truly comprehend the unity of the theoretical and of the practical spheres. The unity of the moral law guarantees the unity of the philosopher's theoretical knowledge and spirit. From this point of view, the philosopher and the poet share exactly the same attitude. They both begin and end their journey *from* and *into* an original element that is not intuited in its abstractness, but through the aesthetic act the unifies on a higher ground of reality (the unconditional) what was divided and separated. Intellectual intuition realizes the new unity within a totality comprehended in its original separation.

[126] *Schellingiana Rariora,* op. cit., 52.

[127] The two problems arising from these positions are the classical problems of the metaphysics of representation, that were already questioned by the *Briefe* as the contraposition between dogmatism and criticism. How is it possible the adequate correspondence between our representations and the external objects? (theoretical problem); how is it possible that the external objects correspond to our free representations? (practical problem).

This new unity, that repeats and re-enacts the original unity, is beauty: it makes the ideas sensible and evident through the objectification in the productive process of the work of art. The conciliation realized by the work of art allows the reconciliation of the faculties of the human spirit within the poietic unity, which is the educator of humanity and the founder of the mythology of reason: "If we don't give to the ideas an aesthetic form, they shall be of no interest fro the people, and vice versa: if mythology is not rational, the philosopher feels ashamed. [...] Mythology must become philosophical, in order to make the people rational, and philosophy must become mythological, in order to make the philosophers sensitive. Then an eternal unity shall reign among men"[128].

We don't know for sure who is the author of the *Älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus:* we do know that in Schelling's speculation, there is a decisive transition from the limited possibilities of the synthesis of theoretical an practical philosophy (aimed at conciliating the finite I and the objectified not-I within the ambit of knowledge), to the superior unity of the spirit and the world of nature, of freedom and necessity. This goal can be achieved only by an aesthetic philosophy or by a transcendental philosophy aesthetically re-oriented. The ethical endeavor and the strive to become identical (that cannot be fully realized but only inevitably defeated) are replaced by the aesthetic activity that comprehends the *mise-en oeuvre* in its contingency and finiteness.

The philosopher, as the poet, cannot defeat his own destiny, but he can bear and conciliate this destiny in the internal unity of his own faculties in their free interplay that reflects the external unity of Totality. Reflection is grounded on the fracture of the indistinct unity between man and nature, and philosophy can lead us back to the absolute, and can also transcendentally understand the conditions of its own being. But philosophy cannot go any further. Philosophy can reach the ineffable silence of the absolute and say something about it, only if becomes aesthetical, and becomes a traveling companion of art. Art is therefore the exemplary experience of the objectiveness of the absolute and of the reconciliation of the succumbing and pacified opposed terms of the struggle.

[128] *Schellingiana Rariora,* op. cit., 53; see also Hölderlin's *Hyperion.*

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Chapter 6

THE PARADOX OF OPPOSITION

ABHANDLUNGEN ZUR ERLÄUTERUNGEN DES IDEALISMUS DER WISSENSCHAFTSLEHRE.SCHELLING BETWEEN LEIPZIG AND JENA

1. The Problem.

The *Abhandlungen* collect Schelling's writings of his two-year sojourn in Leipzig (1796-1797). They were published on the "Philosophisches Journal" with the title *Allgemeine Übersicht der neuesten philosophischen Litteratur.* These writings were collected and republished in 1809 with their final title: *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterungen des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* (SW I, 343-452).

These writings represent the foundation for the construction of the system of transcendental idealism and of Schelling's philosophy of nature. Schelling's need to elaborate a philosophy of nature (compatible with his transcendental idealism) emanated from the necessity to analyze the conditions of possibility of empirical reality *(Wirklickeit).* This necessity obliges Schelling to re-think radically the doctrine of the I, as the unconditional and the totality of reality *(Realität),* and the paradox of the separation between the conditional and the unconditional.

Schelling's transcendental idealism and philosophy of nature stem from Kant's transcendental philosophy. They are possible thanks to the *a priori* synthetic judgments, that Schelling formulates as follows: "How is it possible for the absolute I to step out and oppose to itself the not-I." (SW I, 175; OI, 81). The I contains the entire *Realität* and also the reality of the not-I, i.e., what is not unconditional. The not-I cannot realize itself by itself, but only through the absolute and original opposition, insofar it is opposed. Originally, there is an opposition (*Entgegensetzung*) in the unconditional and *through* the unconditional that is there *before,* and that anticipates the sphere

of every objectivity of the not-I, the external *posited* world. Opposition exists before every position, and it is the condition of possibility of every position. Every position already exists within the opposition, and its concrete realization is a manifestation of the reality *(Wirklichkeit)* of the opposition. Otherwise the opposition would be absolute, in-actual and eternal. Fichte believed that the *Wirklichkeit* was something that was merely found[129]; Schelling (who didn't fear the evaluation of the external world) wanted to reach the original principle of the *Realität,* but he also wanted the *Realität* to be one with the unconditional *(Un-be-dingt):* the *Realität,* getting out of itself on the basis of a *spontaneous faculty* of the moment of opposition also had *to give form to the unconditional.*

If the not-I is absolutely opposed, the not-I is absolutely nothing. Schelling talks about an original opposition which is the opposition between the Totus of the unconditional reality and the absolute *Nihil* as negation (SW I, 188; OI 90). This opposition anticipates and makes the opposition between an I (a knowing empirical subject) and a not-I (and object to be known) possible. Schelling translates Kant's question concerning the possibility of the a priori synthetic judgments into another problem: "*How* is it possible for the absolute I to step out and oppose to itself the not-I?" Thus this problem acquires a new form: How the Whole separates itself from Reality and the unconditional gives form to the conditional removing temporarily itself through the process of productive that coincides with the uprooting *(Aushebenheit)* of the absolute I from itself in the direction of posing-in-front something determined (SW I, 189-190; OI, 90-91).

The answer to this question must be found in the action of a faculty of the human soul –the faculty of spontaneity– that allows the absolute and unconditional I to give form to a world in such a way that the world becomes objective and conditional. The synthetic faculty leads the human spirit to give sense and form to reality and to produce reality as a comprehensive image in representation: "This is the reason why I repeated many times that spirit, for me, means what is *for itself,* and not for an extraneous being *(Wesen),* therefore, originally [spirit] is not an object, and even less an object *in itself*". Thus the Spirit is the unconditional I in its own activity: therefore it is only in the becoming, or, rather, it is nothing else than an eternal becoming" that becomes an object only thanks to itself and to its own action (SW I, 367n). It is a faculty that "imparts his form, that imparts reality to the not-I through the transfer of the form of the I to the not-I", and that does so repeating the initial gesture of the absolute that gets out of itself. It is the

[129] See the Fichte's letter of November 15, 1800, in Fichte-Schelling, *Briefwechsel,* hrsg. v. W. Schulz, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1968).

faculty of the transcendental synthesis of the imagination in the intuition (*Synthesis der Ein-bildung-kraft in der Anschauung*)[130].

Schelling presupposes a synthesis that is more original, so to speak, than the synthesis of the intuition that produces the object ("everything that for us is object (*Objekt*) and thing *(Ding)* became what it is only through an original synthesis of the intuition" SW I, 355). This further synthesis acts in the moment of the original uprooting and opening of the I, that produces the unconditional, that is, the separation from the opposition of the *Realität* at the beginning of the formative process. This synthesis abides in a "nowhere" that is more original of the sensible intuition: it is a "nowhere" that precedes and makes the synthesis of knowledge possible and that challenges philosophy with the supreme problem of reason (*das höchste Problem der Vernunft*). This Problem is the problem of the critique of the faculty of productive imagination that Schelling draws from Kant's *First Deduction* of the *Critique of Pure Reason.*

2. The Synthesis of Transcendental Imagination and the Constitution of the Object.

According to Schelling, when Kant talks about the synthesis of the imagination in intuition he talks about the synthesis produced by the action of a sentiment of the soul (*Handlung des Gemüts*) that anticipates the synthesis of the intuition. This is why he uses the expression "in intuition" when he writes about the synthesis of the imagination. The object *(Objekt)* is the result of the synthetic concourse of the faculties. It is always the original synthesis of the imagination in pro of the sensible intuition.

Schelling sees a difference between *Objekt* and *Gegenstand.* The synthesis of the imagination produces the *Objekt:* the object in its objectivity aimed at its representation. This is not the material production of an object *(Gegenstand),* i.e. of what stands in front of the subject as a materially determined resistance to its presence, but the production created by the conditions of the possibility to impart a form to what is formless and meaningless. These are the transcendental possibilities of the unity of multiplicity. The formative process of the limitation in space and time takes place in the synthesis of productive imagination, allowing the overcoming of

[130] Schelling's expression *Ein-bildung-kraft* indicates the synthetic and productive capability in the spirit of the Transcendental Deduction written by Kant in 1781. Kant decided to re-write this text, because he thought it to be too idealistic. Schelling considered this description more adequate because it explained the capability to produce images *(Bild)* and because it underlines the *bilden-Bildung* matrix, the capability to impart form, faculty of production.

the point of view of the absolute opposition (the point of view of the full-blown paradox) aiming at the synthesis of the intuition of a concrete object *(Gegen-stand).* The object is not necessarily external, but the result of the encounter of internal and external: the synthetic unification of extension (space) and limitation (time). We don't find ourselves among objects, but we form them, imparting them sense and form, through a synthesis: "the object is not something that is given to us from the external as such, but only the product of the original self-activity of the spirit that, from two opposite activities, creates a produces a third common [activity], *the original, transcendental [activity] of imagination in intuition.*" (SW I, 357). The action of the sentiment, the synthesis of imagination, makes the matter of the intuition real; we –our sentiment– are what we are.

Schelling, in his *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* connects the synthetic action of the sentiment of productive imagination to the horizon of a common world (*gemeinschaftliche Welt*) within which there is an actual existence of the objects. Schelling speaks of a unique condition, common to every man, that allows the world to be objective in the same way for everybody. The principle of this common world must be sought in the action of this sentiment of the imagination: every man shares the principle of objectivity as a sentiment. The function of this principle is analogous (but not identical) to the principle of the determination of common sense in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (Fourth Moment of the Analysis of the beautiful). The sentiment of productive imagination precedes both concept and object and their condition of possibility. The common sentiment is the principle of the determination of the judgment of taste and an exigency of knowledge in general (i.e. the possibility to experience an objective empirical world). This principle (and exigency) is rooted in experience and in its universal communicability.

We are among the contingent objects through the act of our empirical I: at the same time, we are not among the contingent objects because we are (we exist) before them (in a non-chronological sense, of course): *we are within the synthesis of imagination.* We are internally constituted by the horizon of our experience by the condition of objectivity rooted in the original conflict. Experience is the synthesis of imagination in intuition: the encounter of original interiority an intuited exteriority. *We exist* within this opposition because we are the activity of this synthesis. The synthesis of the imagination precedes the faculty of concepts (the intellect) that theoretically transforms the intuitions into representations. Representations are possible because there is an originally autonomous internal principle. This principle is the original representation (*ursprünglische Vorstellen*): the internal condition that we already are, that allows determined and finite representation. Schelling writes: "that the original representation –that

original construction– is not simply ideal but *real and originally necessary:* this I cannot explain to anyone if I don't make the internal principle of every representation and construction accessible. But this internal principle is nothing but the original *act* of the *spirit on itself,* the original autonomy that, considered from a *theoretical* point of view, is a representation or – which is the same– *a construction of finite things,* and that from the practical point of view, is a *will.*" (SW I, 414). This principle, within contingency, is the transcendental place in which concept and object are united, in the perspective of their separation (and determination) in representation. The original representation is always the productive imagination that is the free and unconditional action aimed at the construction of the object of the representation and the *place* in which the common sense is preserved and acts (SW I, 446-449).

The problem of the genesis of the affection, i.e. the problem of the origin of man's orientation towards the institution and the realization of the external, empirical, concrete and represented world stems from this place. This is the problem of the origin of the correspondence between thought and reality, the question of the separation between speculation and nature, situated within the transcendental sphere of our feeling. According to Schelling, the origin of this question implies the understanding the essence of the nature of our being and of our knowledge: intuition and concept are separated in speculation, but they are united in the nature of our thought.

Schelling connects this question to the first metaphysical question ("why being instead of nothingness?"), and changes its form: he explores the origin and the essence of the original conflict of self-consciousness that leads (in the sensible intuition and in the intellect) to the birth of the external real world and its perception through a determined representation. Schelling sees in the movement of the synthesis of the imagination, and in the intuition that overcomes the original conflict through the repetition of the original intuition of the object in immediacy, a true *Creatio ex Nihilo* (*eine Schöpfung aus Nichts*). This creation is the self-removal of the unconditional I through its opening and limitation, and is also the formation of the material, aimed at its synthesis of the intuition and of its intellective knowledge. This represents the maximum unity of this synthesis: "there is no world if there's not a spirit that knows it, and vice versa, there is no spirit if there's no world outside of it. The essence of spiritual nature consists in this: in its self-consciousness there is an original conflict *(ein ursprünglicher Streit)* from which the real world *(wirklische Welt)* stems in the intuition (a creation from nothingness). [...]. Kant says that to in order to know an object outside myself, pure intuition is not enough [...] because the imagination produces the object synthetically, and [the object] cannot be intuited at the same time by the mind as an *object,* i.e. something to which, independently

from it, pertains a true and autonomous existence. Only after that this faculty has accomplished its work, *intellect* –according to Kant– must take over, a useful faculty that grasps, *comprehends* and fixes what the other [faculty] has produced. [...] Now, after that intuition and reality (*Realität*) have disappeared the imagination can only *imitate,* only repeat the original action of intuition, in which the object was present: for this, imagination is necessary. [...]. Thus it only repeats the *formal* element of that modality of action." (SW I, 358-359).

Schelling, in order to understand the formation process of the imagination, underlines the fact that the object is not what it is immediately intuited by the sensibility in its autonomy and real determination *(Gegenstand),* but rather the product of the synthesis of the intellect, that conceptualizes the product of the productive imagination after this *Ein-bildung-krafts* have thought it in pro of the sensible intuition, and after it acted through an absolutely free action (SW I, 359).

Schelling's is evidently in debt with Kant's First deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and to the *Critique of Judgment.* This dualism between intellect and sensibility is connected to the transcendental faculty of imagination, *repeating* the archetype of the original separation from which the conflict stems. In Schelling this corresponds to the separation between the empirical I and the world of determined objects, that by imagination are conceived as united in the real identity of the unconditional: it is a unity that exceeds every determination; it is the condition of the possibility of every determination. This separation repeats the original separation between the conditional and the unconditional and modifies the latter on the level of transcendental finitude. This separation is the translation of the original separation on the level of the radical and reciprocal belonging of empirical subject and empirical world (I am).

The necessity of separation is ideal in speculative thought and corresponds to the inevitable and necessary realization (the necessity of contingency) of the product of the original opposition, i.e. the productive synthesis of the unconditional. The separation produced by sensibility and intellect is the kingdom of the logical thought (determined knowledge) that repeats within the subject the separation between subject and object in their reciprocal belonging (I think): "in speculation scheme can be separated from the object, but in nature (in our knowledge) they are never apart. A concept without a sensible by imagination is a word with no sense, a sound with no meaning. Only when the mind can oppose object and contour, real and formal and relate them and compare them, now, for the first time there is a intuition with consciousness, and the unmovable conviction of the mind itself that something is in fact real without itself and independently by itself.

[...] only with the concourse of intuition and concept the luminous point of objective knowledge can be found." (Ibid.).

On the contrary, transcendental philosophy must think separation and unity together, "seizing with one look the great and surprising whole of our nature" (SW I, 360), overcoming the determined conceptual knowledge, and understanding the superior unity of the faculties (intellect and sensibility, concept and intuition, object and representation) within the frame of an aesthetic expansion of the conceptual and speculative ambit: an aesthetic pre-comprehension of the conceptual and speculative ambit. This is the attempt to re-think the diverse levels or spheres of unity and separation within the dynamics of the inadequacy of the theoretical sphere, which is balanced by the questioning effort of transcendental idealistic realism: "are we surprised to hear this from philosophers in whose philosophy everything is separation? Nonetheless, this fact can be explained. This is a speculative talent which is indispensable to philosophy, but truly disgraceful if is not connected to the philosophical talent to reunite what has been separated: only this two talents together make a philosopher." (SW I, 359-360).

The synthesis of sensibility and intellect repeats the original activity of productive imagination: thus the formation of the world –and therefore the attribution of meaning to this or to the other world by philosophy– is the repetition (or reproduction) of the absolutely free act of the original productive imagination, i.e. of the unconditional action of the I that opens itself operating a separation within itself through the limitation of the opposite. Through the repetition of sensibility and intellect the I creates the fundament of common knowledge: there is something external and independent from us: "The fundamental principle of the philosophy that we are talking about, can be expressed in the following few words: "the form of our knowledge comes from ourselves, the matter of our knowledge is given to us from the external." (SW I, 363-364).

If object and representation are immediately united in intuition, the consciousness of intuition itself (and the subsequent speculation: the moment of the separation between *thought* and *being,* object and representation) originates from the superior synthesis of productive imagination. There is a fracture between object and representation; this is the beginning of the theoretical, aesthetical and intuitive awareness of the contingent multiplicity of the determined objects (matter) and of the related representations (form): "even though in our own knowledge form an matter are united in the most intimate way, nevertheless it's clear that philosophy removes *hypothetically* this union in order to *explain* it." (SW I, 364).

The faculty of imagination allows the aesthetical broadening of the inadequate ambit to the concept of unity of sensibility and intellect. This faculty comprehends the necessity of the connection between the

representation within ourselves and the world outside ourselves. Once again, we find the question concerning the a priori judgments: how is it possible for the I to purely and simply oppose itself to the not-I?

Schelling, in his *Abhandlungen* talks about the *unavoidable circle (unvermedlichen Cirkel)* in which the I finds itself. The only way out is through the position of the supreme point of view *(höchste Standpunkte)* of transcendental idealism (SW I, 411). The I can get out of itself opposing a not-I, not only in the idea (there would be no explanation of the necessity of our objective representations) but also through a real limitation; this opposition is the result of the ideal opposition only if there is the sentiment of a real original limitation (expressed in the opposition and through the opposition). This ideal opposition is possible only if real: if the I doesn't become practical in its opposition to the empirical world of experience this ideal limitation is impossible.

This sentiment, the spontaneity of the synthesis of imagination, arises from the real opposition and represents its condition of possibility. This sentiment is not created by the modification determined by the presence of the present object, but by the original situation in which the I (in its identity of action and passion) finds itself: "the sentiment of being limited rises only *through* the action of opposition, but that sentiment couldn't rise if the limitation wouldn't be *original and real*" (Ibid.).

The *I feels itself limited and restricted (es sich selbst als beschränkt fühlt):* it is trapped within a fundamental circularity. The I can ideally oppose a limit to itself only if it is really limited in its origin. Similarly, the I is really limited only if it feels this limitation as originally ideal. The passio of being limited (perception, intuition) and the act to set the limitation coincide in the original nature of our spirit: they are the same action *(eine und dieselbe Handlung unsers geistes ist).* Thus the spirit is originally passive and active (passiv und aktiv), determined and determining *(bestimmt und bestimmend),* reality and ideality *(Realität und Idealität),* necessity and freedom *(Nothwendgkeit und Freiheit).* Since the critical philosophy is identified with transcendental idealism we can think the absolute identity in that "wonderful phenomenon" represented by the sentiment as the internal condition of our representations *(das Phänomen des Gefühls des Sinnlich-Geistigen in uns)* (SW I, 412).

Thanks to this initial condition, Schelling's thought is neither dialectic nor limited to the theoretical sphere. Schelling's speculation can conceive and actually think the absolute identity of subject and object in the original union of *actio* and *passio:* a nature capable to determine itself. This nature is comprehended reaching the beginning of the real (and not only ideal) representations, i.e. the preliminary sphere of the separation from which emanate both the knowing and representing subject and the known and

represented object. This sphere is the original identity of the *theoretical and practical element within ourselves,* within which there is the game between affections and thought: affections become thoughts and vice versa (SW I, 412-413).

The object is nothing but "myself in my finite production" *(Ich selbst in meinem endlichen Produciren)* and the result of the theoretical-practical identity realized by transcendental idealism. Theoretical philosophy (conceived as the transition from transcendental reflection to empirical knowledge through the synthesis ob object and subject) begins with the production of finite objectiveness. "The character of spiritual nature is exactly this: that through its pure and free action, the matter of its own action is also determined, that is, its pure [element] immediately determines the empirical. We have demonstrated that in the theoretical action of the spirit (in representation), through its action, the object, the matter of action itself arises: thus its empirical [element] is determined by the transcendental." (SW I, 428-429).

This transition allows the comprehension of the circle of reality that stems from the reciprocal belonging of condition and conditional. This unity, in turn, is realized through the reciprocal and mutual action of the condition and of the conditional in the same moment in which the finite objective world stems from their relation: "But now this is clear: the condition is absolutely not representable without the conditional, and vice versa, the conditional is not representable without the condition, that is, they are both representable only in *a third,* that stems from their union. [...]. This third category doesn't exist a priori anywhere as a void form, but it is *produced* only *actively,* with an *action* in which, for this precise reason, reality and negation must be originally and absolutely united." (SW I, 425-426).

The pages in which Schelling analyzes the paradoxical co-belonging and reciprocal transition within the synthesis of the condition and of the conditional are very clear and enlightening. The original opposition between the unconditional (the I) and the conditional (the empirical world) repeats the onto-theological situation of the fall of the absolute within immediacy, and its transfiguration in the human spirit: this process can be called a *transcendental anthropology.*

Our spirit is originally duplicitous: there is an original duplicity *(eine ursprünglische Duplicität),* in this action, in which we build, produce and act. This is possible because our spirit is founded on the principle of the original union of conditioning and being conditioned: this third principle, is actually the first one: the building origin (SW I, 426). However, this original duplicity is not representable, but only thinkable as the identity of the conditional and of the unconditional. This duplicity must reconcile the opposition, placing the opposition within the unconditional I (which is now

the duplicitous spirit). Or spirit cannot "act without being at the same time the object of the action." (SW I, 427). The principle of identity within duplicity is the principle of every transcendental idealism on which the original fact that in our spirit there is no difference between feeling and action, a priori and a posteriori, transcendental sensibility (intuition) and transcendental intellect (concept), rests. Our spirit *opens* up thanks to this principle, and unfolds itself in the two directions *(tasks)* of duplicity.

The unceasing struggle represented by tragedy, the external world (as a representation of the essential finite condition of man) takes also place within our spirit. However, the spirit can look at separation and duplicity as a unity, because it becomes itself willing itself. The will allows the pure to determine the empirical, and the realization, outlined in Schelling's *Vom Ich,* to annihilate the empirical and to realize the absolute within the nonfactual relation of finiteness.

The annihilation of finiteness takes place within a position of absolute freedom ("the absolute determination of the unconditional through the *simple natural law of its being*", SW I, 437), and allows us to grasp the unity of reality and ideality, feeling and action. Pure action, represented by our absolute will, must become empirical. Through this action, we can elaborate theoretical representations of the world, and unfold the "sentiment that so deeply dwells in ourselves, of our moral finiteness, that allows us to find ourselves at home in the external world as the sphere of our finiteness." (SW I, 440).

This tendency is coupled by the necessary tendency toward infinity, that pushes us to our annihilation because "finiteness is not our original state." Our original state is the paradoxical unity of finite and infinite. We become aware, within our finite condition, that we became finite, and that we are separated from the external world (which is not nature anymore but finite objectiveness): "it is our own finiteness that makes our world finite". This fact is coupled by the ineludible tension that makes our world "infinite through our own action".

3. The Role of Imagination in Transcendental Idealism

The theme of imagination is one of the elements of continuity between Kant and the young Schelling. According to Schelling, though, imagination produces what freedom must realize: its ethical tension towards infinity, which is its necessary, and yet never fully accomplishable task. Freedom is the projecting infinity that offers theoretical reason the ideas that will later become objective; freedom, in order to become an object, must also be limited by reason. Imagination plays a mediating role producing the ideas that freedom shall realize with the limitation of theoretical reason, and

offering the very material that freedom shall realize within finiteness. Imagination also denies to theoretical reason the possibility to fully realize its idea, and confirms the infinitely active and projecting character of the I (SW I, 431-432). Productive imagination, within the sphere of absolute identity, sets in motion the process of fracture that freedom shall later realize. Imagination achieves this result through a process in *which the absolute unconditional becomes an object to and for itself.* The finite becoming of freedom brings forth the formation of the system of finite representations. Finite freedom and finite representation are *the sentiment of our own finiteness and the sentiment of feeling ourselves within an objective world:* "The entire history of our [human] genre still belongs to finiteness. History begins with the original sin, that is, with the first arbitrary act, and ends with the reign of reason, when every arbitrariness shall disappear from the earth." (SW I, 439).

This is the premise for another step: "Now we can somehow determine the transcendental place from which our intellectual [element] becomes empirical. With that only action, through which the absolute in us becomes its own object (the freedom in arbitrariness), an entire system of finite representations, [...] and the sentiment of our moral finiteness, that so deeply dwells in ourselves unfold. [...]" (SW I, 440).

The relation between the sentiment of the finitude of our being and representations, and the sentiment of real limitation (the condition of our representations) is truly paradoxical. We become aware of the objective world only when we feel that we originally belong to the unconditional, from which our orientation towards the world originates. This world is built upon the I's productive synthesis, realized through its faculty of imagination. This faculty is not, properly speaking, a merely conceptual and sensorial faculty: it is the faculty that allows us to give a meaning to ourselves and to the world, which is the authentic sentiment of our being.

The faculty of imagination productively unifies sensibility and intellect. The consequence of this process is that the external world is not the mere receptacle of objects, but an infinitely productive and produced world. This idea paves the way for the definition of a new concept of nature, that shall support Schelling's project for the creation of the system of transcendental idealism.

Nature is the objective world that was annihilated in its objectiveness; nature is the reciprocal annihilation of subjectivity and objectivity; nature is the continuous action of our spirit, that reaches its self-consciousness bestowing and imparting extension, continuity and necessity. Nature, in other words, necessarily and originally expresses and realizes the laws of our spirit. Schelling follows Kant's first Critique, and the groove traced by its *Deduction* justifying the necessary objectivity of the relation between

representation and object, spirit and nature: "surely Kant affirmed that the laws of nature are modalities of the actions of our spirit [...], but he also added that nature is anything different from these laws, because nature is only a continuous action of the infinite spirit, in which it reaches self-consciousness, and through which it imparts on this consciousness extension, time, continuity and necessity." (SW I, 361).

This is the necessary unity of the accord between object and representation: this accord takes place before the separation of sensibility and intellect and it rests on the transcendental fundament of the original opposition. Schelling believes that in Kant there is no separation between object and representation: they are opposed in theoretical knowledge but transcendentally unified in the unity of consciousness and reality and in the necessity established by imagination, that unites concept and intuition, representation and object (SW I, 362). Thus we must annihilate the separation between object and representation: in order to achieve this goal we must overcome the speculative stage (that takes place within the friction between the knowing subject and the known object) from within. Schelling develops his speculation on the higher ground of transcendental idealism: the ground of real unity in its immediacy. The faculties are united by the higher faculty of productive imagination. Transcendental idealism grasps the real unity in its immediacy, encompassing totality and unity, leaving behind very theoretical knowledge, that remains sealed within the sphere of the conceptualizations of the discursive intellect. "This faith in the original identity of object and representation is the root of our theoretical and practical intellect." (SW I, 378). This faith operates through an intuition which is the hidden root of practical and theoretical reason.

The spontaneous faculty of productive imagination is the principle of reality; it can be identified with the original action of the unconditional I. Productive imagination re-enacts the original separation: it forms the object *in pro* of the intuition, and representation *in pro* of the intellect. Imagination unconditionally imparts form and matter, and plays a decisive role in the inner condition of reality itself providing the concrete presence of the determinations through *the necessity of the separation of the opposition.* Imagination, in its absolute freedom and spontaneity, separates the I from itself, and breaks the unity of *Nicht* and *Realität.* This process leads to the union of the act of *imparting meaning* and the act *of imparting form and matter.*

This productive spontaneity is the original sentiment that challenges the paradoxical sphere of our finiteness. The sentiment of our original limitation makes us feel within the unconditional whole of the reality of the I (we feel that somehow we are that spirit that freely acts in imagination); this sentiment is also the feeling of a separation that already took place, and

through which we know that we dwell in finiteness, in the accomplished (and yet unfulfilled) synthesis of imagination.

We feel that we do not entirely belong to the external world, through this original sentiment: our very being is rooted in the *inner condition* that is the principle of determination of the contingent world and of every determined representation. This sentiment also tells us *that we do belong to this world,* because we continuously realize the movement set in motion by imagination: the infinite becoming of the finite.

Our apparently contradictory perceptions and feelings remain: this is the fundamental paradox. We are *in* this world, we are *out* of this world, *and we are in this world as if we are out.* Thus we are constantly separated from the intuition of our unconditional identity and always very close to our contingent reality.

Philosophy must comprehend the transcendental condition of the imparting of meaning and form. In his *Briefe,* Schelling criticized the dogmatic and empirical philosophical traditions because they both remained within the ambit of separation, and because they merely saw the fracture of identity. It is impossible, through a theoretical speculation, to understand the necessity of our representations: object and representation are ideally divided, but they are mutually correspondent in theoretical knowledge, and the intellect can conceive the world only as an external reality.

Schelling's critical idealism begins where speculative philosophy ends, and grasps the problem of the absolute correspondence of object and representation, of being and knowledge (SW I, 365). Schelling questions the necessity of the nexus between these terms, leaving aside the research concerning their contingent and determined correspondence. Schelling's philosophy begins with separation in order to place itself outside separation and to grasp the very beginning of productive imagination. Here's the turning point: the *radical questioning* of the object-representation contraposition and the re-affirmation, through sensible intuition and determined knowledge, our *being-within:* "it is now evident that as soon as we counterposit the object to the representation, as something placed outside ourselves (as we do so raising that question) there is no possible accord between the two." (Ibid.).

Schelling's critical philosophy challenges the philosophical quest, and asks the question about its own necessity. Schelling wonders about the unavoidability of that determined questioning. In order to achieve this goal, this philosophy must question and criticize the faculty of productive imagination from within the state of the separation of sensibility and intellect. Schelling's idealistic realism is a critical philosophy when it reaches its highest end, that is, the supreme moment in which the spirit intuits itself, and becomes the unconditional I in its real identity with nature.

This I is the content of the identity of subject and object, knowledge and being, and about which we don't have to question its accord with the representation (SW I, 366-367).

The original co-existence of unconditional and conditional is the key through which we can properly read the quest of Schelling's transcendental idealism. In order to elaborate a critique of imagination (i.e., the condition of separation), *we must always begin from the point of view of the separation of sensibility and intellect, intuition and concept.* This is a movement of repetition and *re-enactment* of the unconditional that we achieve through *living productively among products.* Every repetition takes place through the infinite becoming of the finite, in which the unconditional, within the conditional, is never fully realized or understood because it always heeds the call of separation, object and representation.

Imagination represents the moment in which we *feel* to be within the world, because we are near to the identity of free and productive self-consciousness. Imagination is also the moment of our true belonging to a world that *we feel as a limited whole:* as a whole that is continuously and simultaneously productive and produced. When we feel that we live among objects and we form their corresponding meaningful representations, we truly do not merely live among objects: they are our own productions: these productions are possible through the initial movement of imagination. We live in this world as the disoriented inhabitants of an unconditional that constantly changes and that never fully is. We find a kind of solace only in the self-intuition of what is an object to itself *(für sich selbst Objekt),* that is an absolutely free action on which every true ethics of freedom rests. However, the conditional in which we improperly live is the necessary condition of our being, and the inevitable destiny of finite production.

The philosophy that tries to comprehend this fundamental and paradoxical human situation, in order to grasp the unconditional sphere in which the original opposition becomes the capability to impart form and matter uses a special and specific *organon. Intellectual intuition* is a faculty placed well beyond the mere conceptual and theoretical reflection[131].

[131] In his *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie* (I. Kant, *Werke in zehn Bänden,* op. cit., Ed. 5, 377-397). Kant, in 1796, rejected every philosophy that attempted to immediately grasp the object through an intellectual intuition. Some think that this writing was written against Schelling. We should remember, though, that Schelling's intellectual intuition grasps the I, and not the object. However, Kant himself, in his *Critique of Judgment* (§ 77) talks about an intellect that is non-discursive and intuitive, and that moves from the universal synthetic to the particular, that is, from the whole to its parts. This intuitive intellect could allow us to represent the possibility of the parts as dependent form the whole, according to a principle of possibility of our judgment

According to Schelling, the object is the result of a synthesis, and the spirit can intuit the object because it is a product. How is it possible to grasp this intuition? This is a crucial question: if the object is the product of an action, how can this action return to itself in order to bestow its sphere on itself? How can this intuition be productive, immediate and active and intuit itself and its action at the same time? (SW I, 379). Schelling says: "that property of the soul, through which the soul is capable of an immediate knowledge *(einer unmittelbaren Erkenntnis)* (that is, of a self-intuition), is the duplicity of its tendency *(Duplität ihrer Tendenz)* towards the internal and the external. While these two tendencies mutually penetrate each other, a product is born, which is almost the real construction of the soul itself. This product is now in the soul itself, is not distinct from it, it is immediately present *(unmittelbar gegenwärtig),* and it is properly here that, in the very end, every immediacy, and every certainty of our knowledge dwells." (SW I, 380).

Schelling reviews the unconditional-conditional relation and adds some important considerations. The unconditional I intuits itself in its action, and simultaneously limits itself, turning its inner intuition towards the external, in a synthesis of real and ideal. The I acts and it is acted upon in a paradoxical circle of immediate simultaneity between the free, unconditional infinite being and the limited, determined finite being. The I become conscious and therefore finite within that finiteness. The original freedom of the I realizes a product that determines its action: the I feels limited in a situation in which it feels matter as an external element. The I is limited by the limit of the object. The I feels itself as placed within finiteness, within a world of objects from which determined knowledge emanates. "In the action of intuition the spirit finds itself limited. The limit of its production appears as accidental (the mere accident of its action), while the sphere of production, in which the spirit only intuits its own way to act, appears as the essential element of its action, as the necessary (the substantial)." (SW I, 382).

Schelling affirms the necessity of the contingent and determined element of the action of the I. Critical-idealistic philosophy grasps the original condition of man, in which he is in the world through the synthesis of productive imagination (the unconditional). Critical philosophy answers the question about the necessity of the representations and about the inner necessity our finite existence, and explains the formation of the

of our intellect. The non-discursive, synthetic and representational characters of totality can be also found in Schelling's intellectual intuition. See X. Tilliette, *L'intuition intellectuelle de Kant à Hegel,* op. cit.

representations of external objects. *The objective world is the system of our necessary representations:* "what is the eye, if not the mirror of things? The mirror, however, does not sees itself; it does reflect, but for an external eye. That the body is the mirror of the universe must be deduced only in the system of philosophy, and idealism itself leads us to a point of view from which the principle according to which all our representations arise for the action of external things becomes true. To which world does the body belong? Doesn't it belong to the objective world, that is, to the system of our necessary representations?" (SW I, 389).

The I acts freely following the spontaneity of imagination (imagination=free and absolute action). The I intuits its action in its becoming finite through an intellectual intuition. This is the intellectual intuition of the productive movement of imagination: the highest point of critique.

Schelling's critical idealism is a transcendental philosophy that rejects the traditional distinction between practical and theoretical philosophy. This rejection takes place through a movement that re-thinks the contingent and sensible element in its necessity. The duplicitous and paradoxical gesture of this critical and idealistic philosophy must be a practical gesture, an unconditional action; otherwise we would remain entangled in the contingent element of sensible intuition (empirical metaphysics). We would also remain at the level of the real identity of object and representation: the level of real necessity, and we would be unable to talk about it (dogmatic metaphysics).

The practical action of critical philosophy is realized in the relation between necessity and contingency. This philosophy thinks the moment of productive imagination (the condition of a meaningful world), and the separation between the object and the representation produced by imagination. The object becomes external, the counterposited *(ein Objekt entgegengesetz ist)* and contributes to the formation of consciousness, that is a limited I aware of its freedom. "There's no consciousness of the object without a consciousness of freedom; there's non consciousness of freedom without a consciousness of the object." (SW I, 371). The limited and finite I can reach a conceptual knowledge of the external world through its sensorial and conceptual faculties. This knowledge is the repetition of the original productive process of imagination. The supreme point of view of a critical-idealistic philosophy is the intellectual intuition of the identity of unconditional action and its product, i.e. the point of view of the original real-ideal identity. This is the self-intuition of the transcendental condition within separation: the self-intuition of the unconditional in its division into object and representation.

The intellectual intuition of the unconditional is the self-intuition of the productive I becoming its own object through its own action. This intellectual intuition is also the position of the radical question about existence, and the position *from* which this question is asked. *The I is originally finite and infinite in its action.* The intellectual intuition of this unity of subject and object shows the human spirit in its condition within the fundamental paradox, that is, in the point in which we are in this world while we are producing it, and while we strive to reach the self-intuition of this production.

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Chapter 7

PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE

1.The Prelude to the Transcendental Idealism of Nature: the Overcoming of Theoretical and Speculative Philosophy

Schelling began to think about the creation of a *Naturphilosophie* in 1797, with the same intensity that later characterized his work on his *Transzendentalphilosophie.* Schelling's interest for natural science (that also caused him serious health problems) was particularly strong between 1797 and 1799, that is, until the elaboration of the *System.* Let us now analyze the elements of this group of Schelling's writings that confirm our hypotheses[132].

[132] Among the scientists and the naturalists that influenced Schelling in this period there is K. F. Kielmeyer. In 1793 Schelling attended one of his conferences on the relations between organic forces. Kielmeyer studied the research of G. Cuvier on the animal world and on the organization of the organisms, that would later produce Cuvier's *Le régne animal distribuée d'apres son organization,* A. Von Haller's and J. Brown's works on the concept of irritability (e.g., *Primae linae physiologiae* and *Elementa physiologie corporis humani*). Kielmeyer, in 1793, published the essay *Über das Verhältnisee der organist Kräft untereinder in der Rehie der verschidenen Organisationen.* Kielmeyer also studied Ch. Bonnet's evolutionary theories concerning the infinite chain on living beings, and the relation between the organic and the inorganic world. Schelling was deeply influenced, particularly in the elaboration of his dynamical physics, by Kielmeyer's dynamical vitalism, by his criticism against materialistic and mechanical visions of nature, and by his psychological interpretation of Leibniz's *Monadology.* Schelling was also influenced by A. Röschaub's ideas about life as resting on the *Erregbarkeit,* that is, the organism's active and passive self-activity. See R. Berthelot, *Science et philosophie chez Goethe* (Paris: Alcan, 1932); E. Guyenot, *Le sciences de la vie aux XVIIeme et XVIIIeme siecles* (Paris: Michel, 1941); X. Tilliette, *Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir,* op. cit., I, 126-184; G. Canguilhem, *Le normal et le pathologique* (Paris 1972); X. Tilliette, *La nature l'esprit, le visible et l'invisible. Note sur une sentence de Schelling,* "Studi Urbinati", 51, 1-2, 1977,

Schelling's philosophy of nature is not the corollary of his transcendental idealism, but the ambit that defines the accomplishment of his critical idealism. In his writings Schelling expounds the general problem of a philosophy of nature, he is very clear about why a philosophy of nature should be conceived as the ambit of the comprehension of the conditions of possibility of nature as such and its relation to the original role of philosophy within man's existential horizon. In his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur als Einleitung in das Studium dieser Wissenschaft* (1797)[133], Schelling affirms that nature must be understood not only from an empirical and experimental point of view, but also through a philosophical reflection deducing "the possibility of Nature, that is of all-inclusive world of experience, from first principles." (SW II, 11; IPN 9). Nature is far from being a simple and external objective datum, and its condition of possibility is once again the question: "How a world outside us, how a Nature and with it experience, is possible –these are questions for which we have *philosophy* to thank; or rather, *with* these questions philosophy came to be." (SW II, 12; IPN 10).

Once again, we must ask the question about the original separation on which man and the world rest. Separation must be thought of through a reflection that begins from within the conflict between the condition of possibility and the determined conditional, aiming at the unconditional (conceived as the original opposition between internal and external) thought and being, finite and infinity. Schelling is extremely clear about the fact that this conflict-difference (as opposition) is firmly placed within philosophy. This conflict can be conciliated only if we boldly question its necessity and essentiality. Philosophy itself (a non-particular knowledge aiming at understanding the position of the original separation) was born through this conflict.

However, philosophy is the only element that can allow the emersion of separation from within. Schelling now transfers the myth of the Fall on earth, and sees that this state of nature was also the dawning of philosophy:

383-393; *Natur und geschichtlicher Prozeß: Studien zur Naturalphilosophie F. W. J. Schelling,* hrsg. V. H. J. Sandkühler (Frankfurt a. M., 1984); F. Moiso, *Interpretazioni italiane della patologia e visione della natura tedesca,* in F. M. Ferro (ed.), *Passioni della mente e della storia* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989); F. Moiso, *Vita natura, libertà. Schelling (1795-1809),* (Milano: Mursia, 1990); C. Storti, Karl Eberhard, *Schelling, il concetto di vita e di malattia nell'ambiente medico-filosofico romantico* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1994).

[133] SW II, 9-73. Trans. into English by E. E. Harris and P. Heath, with an introduction by R. Stern, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature as Introduction to the Study of this Science,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) (IPN).

"Prior to them mankind had lived in a (philosophical) state of nature. At that time, man was still at one with himself and the world about him." (Ibid.). The onto-theological and ethical matrix of the myth of separation was Schelling's initial impulse to question the demarcation between what is nearer and what is hidden and shrouded in obscurity. Schelling's vision of the separation based on the philosophical structure built in these years, questions philosophy itself.

Philosophy is man's answer to the call of real separation: man acquires the awareness of its condition through philosophy. Man's feeling of being placed within a paradoxical opposition sets philosophy in motion. Thus philosophy, resting on its own foundation, radically questions separation and opposition, aiming at their overcoming through the intuition of the ideal and real unitotality of *Realität:* "Nor would it be conceivable how man should ever have forsaken that condition, if we did not know that his spirit, whose element is *freedom,* strives to make *itself* free, to disentangle itself from the fetters of Nature and her guardianship, and must abandon itself to the uncertain fate of its own powers, in order one day to return, as victor and by its own merit, to that position in which, unaware of itself, it spent the childhood of its reason." (SW II, 12; IPN 10)[134].

Man, who was once seen as exiled in the immediacy of finiteness, must now face and confront his situation. Man's exile is far from being a simple passive condition: man's action sets in motion opposition itself, that in turn is the field of every determined action, which includes philosophical reflection: "As soon as man sets himself in opposition *(sich selbst setzen in Widerspruch)* to the external world (how he does so we shall consider later), the first step to philosophy has been taken. With this separation *(Trennung),* reflection first begins: he separates from now on what Nature had always united, separates the object from the intuition, the concept from the image, finally (in that he becomes his own *object*) himself from himself." (Ibid.).

Separation is the result and the dominion of man's reflection. *Man posits himself in the opposition while positing the opposition as such through reflection.* This opposition is the mirror on whose reflected image the distance between object and concept, intuition and image, experience and judgment is reproduced and doubled. From the point of view of reflection, the world becomes the object dogmatically posited against man's position: it is the other side of separation. Every attempt to bridge the gap of this separation is doomed to failure: neither the intellect, nor imagination can seize the absolutely real (ens realissimus) outside the spirit.

[134] See also M. Heidegger, *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der menschlischen Freihet (1809),* hrsg. v. H. Feick (Tübingen: Niemeyer 1971).

Therefore mere reflection is a spiritual sickness in mankind: "It is an evil which accompanies man into life itself, and distorts all his intuition ever for the more familiar objects of consideration [the phenomenal world]." (SW II, 13; IPN 11)[135].

Reflection can only make the separation between man and the world abysmal, insuperable, permanent and final. The process of the constitution of consciousness objectifies the consistence of the not-I (matter). Every philosophy that solely relies on reflection is doomed to failure. Philosophy, *necessarily presupposes an original dissension,* and moves on from the sphere of separation to its ultimate *Aufhebung* only through freedom. From this point of view, philosophy aims at its own destruction *(Vernichtung):* philosophy, overcoming the theoretical and conceptual contraposition of dogmatic and critical metaphysics, annihilates itself. With this achievement, philosophy realizes the annihilation of the empirical element that was invoked by Schelling's *Vom Ich:* from the theoretical point of view the world is merely external to the subject, but not from the point of view of the *Realität,* which is the element that precedes productive imagination, and its promise to realize man's deepest aspirations.

In productive imagination "object and representation are one and the same thing": the reality of separation and the subsequent philosophical and theoretical position, emanates from the awareness that our position is not the position of the world. Schelling believes that this philosophy of representation is based on the assumption of the insuperable separation between the I (the self) and the world. When we ask ourselves how the representations of external objects are possible, we erroneously think that these objects are independent from the process through which we elaborate their representation.

We also interpret our relation with the world as a cause-effect relation, in which our representations are merely caused by the objects. However, the principle of causality only strengthens this separation. Only freedom allows us to see the problem from a super-representational and non-conceptual perspective. Freedom also allows philosophy to ask how we can have representations. We don't have any concept of the object before its representation: thus the I can move away from its own representations in order to understand how they are possible. In doing so, the I also feels to be free in relation with the world of the objects, that is, it feels to be a being-in-

[135] See Schelling's conclusion of his *Briefe:* "We feel freer in our spirit if we now return from the state of speculation to the enjoyment and exploration of nature without fear that an ever-recurring anxiety of our unsatisfied spirit might lead us back into that unnatural state" (SW I, 341; PL 195). Here *Spekulation* is truly a philosophy of reflection, in which the external is reflected in the internal.

itself. This being-in-itself is the accomplishment of annihilation, and its statement is: "I am not an object", and "I live in a world entirely my own [...]. Thus, with this question itself, I step out of the series of my ideas, release myself from connection with the things, adopt a position where no external force can reach me any longer; now, for the first time, the two hostile beings, *mind* and *matter* separate." (SW II, 16-17; IPN 13).

The philosophy of Schelling begins by questioning its conditions of possibility. This question stems from man's state of separation. The overcoming of separation consists in the acknowledgement of the unconditionality of the absolute position of being in the opposition and in its annihilation. The very fact that the philosopher questions the possibility of his representations, indicates that he moves from within the original and determined position in which every man was originally placed. In this situation the philosopher must move away from the objects and their representations, aiming at their condition of possibility, which is the original separation in which he always lived: "In order to be able to philosophize, therefore, one must be capable of asking that very question with which all philosophy begins [...]. *That* I am capable of posing this question is proof enough that I am, as such, independent of external things." (SW II, 18; IPN 14). This paradoxical circle is the essence of man's condition, who lives in the intersection of conditional and unconditional, infinity and finiteness, internal and external.

The answer to the question concerning the problem of the possibility of the external world must be sought in the *light that does not shed any light*: i.e. in the fact that *an universe does exist,* which is the general idea of the world that makes the world possible and comprehensible through the *sentiment of the limit of experience*: "The question answers itself in the negative; for the ultimate knowledge from experience is this, that a universe exists; this proposition is the limit of experience itself." (SW II, 24; IPN 18).

The problem represented by the world's very existence is the problem of the sentiment originated by the detachment between ideal and real, infinity and finiteness. This event also implies the necessary modification of an indistinct Unitotality and, within ourselves, the unfolding of its distinction. According to Schelling, Spinoza erroneously disregarded the paradoxical entanglement of interiority and exteriority to choose the way of exteriority alone: "Spinoza [...] saw that ideal and real (thought and object) are most intimately united in our nature. [...] Therefore we could not become aware of the real, save in contrast to the ideal, or of the ideal, save in contrast to the real. Accordingly, no separation could occur between the actual things and our ideas of them. Concepts and things, thought and extension, were, for this reason, one and the same for him, both only modifications of one and the same ideal nature. However, instead of descending into the depths of his

self-consciousness and descrying the emergence thence of the two worlds in us –the ideal and the real– he passed himself by; instead of explaining from our nature how finite and infinite, originally united in us, proceed reciprocally from each other, he lost himself forthwith in the idea of an infinite outside us. [...] For, because there was no transition in his system from infinite to finite, a beginning of becoming was for him as inconceivable as a beginning of *being*." (SW II 35-36; IPN 27-28).

Thus we must understand within ourselves the unity of finite and infinite that are originally and inseparably united. The very nature of our spirit rests on this original union. Schelling's criticism of Spinoza's dogmatic realism coincides with the annihilation of the empirical element and the destruction of the theoretical and speculative philosophies. Schelling, transferring Spinoza's speculation inside the spiritual subject, delivers a devastating and deadly blow to many philosophers, from Leibniz and his followers to the philosophers in Tübingen and to the critical philosophers.

Philosophy, avoiding the risk of becoming a mere natural science or a sterile dogmatic realism, asks the fundamental question about the *general possibility of nature.* Thus nature, in its co-original relation with our spirit, is always approached in its *becoming real for ourselves.* Philosophy must discover "how that system and that assemblage of phenomena have found their way to our minds, and how they have attained the necessity in our conception with which we are absolutely compelled to think of them." (SW II, 29; IPN 23). Once again, on a natural and real level, necessity and possibility are exactly the same thing. The original unity of finite and infinite that is continuously lost in the determined sequence of phenomena can be found within ourselves as the condition of possibility of the phenomenon itself.

This is truly astounding: only a few months before the pages of Schelling's writings were teeming with the reciprocal connection between the I and the not-I. In this new writing Schelling questions the very essence of nature: he casts aside empirical realism, turns away from a theoretical science founded on a subject-object dualism, and finds the way to accomplish his project of the annihilation of the empirical.

The empirical, however, maintains its specific value. Things are not outside ourselves, and they are not independent from our representations. They are all contained and ordered in the space-time sequence *(Naturlauf)* which corresponds to the principle of the imparting of reality in Schelling's *Vom Ich.* This principle has become the principle nature that unfolds the horizon for the overcoming of theoretical philosophy and for the projects of the human spirit: "So nothing remains but the attempt to derive the necessity of a succession of presentations from the nature of our mind, and so of the finite mind as such, and, in order that this succession may be genuinely

objective, to have the things themselves, together with its sequence, arise and come into being in it." (SW II, 35; IPN 27).

Schelling, after his *Briefe,* is convinced that he must venture beyond every theoretical and speculative limitation, and to understand life through life itself[136]. Before this crucial moment, the opposition was conceived as the unconditional in its co-belonging and co-origin with the conditional. Schelling abandons his philosophy of the I and develops a new philosophy of the spirit in which Leibniz's *principium individuationis* is reinterpreted through Jacobi's reflection, and separation is reunited within the dynamics of life and within its development in every individual being: "This transition is absent only where finite and infinite are *originally* united, and this *original* union exists nowhere except in the essence of an individual nature." (SW II, 37; IPN 28).

The object of philosophy is its own generation. Schelling's philosophy of the nature of our spirit *(Naturlehre unseres Geistes)* affirms the common root from which both life and philosophy stem: this *genetic* philosophy is a *Lehre* aiming at the absolute fundament of its own being and knowledge. It must be comprehensible from the point of view of our representations and in which every separation between experience and speculation has been annihilated. Philosophy must grasp the principle that imparts the space-time reality on the natural process.

This principle dwells *in* the spirit, and *it is* the spirit: the formal and real unity of separation. The identity of the system of nature and the system of our spirit and the relation between philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism rests on this basis. The organism, that exists for itself (and in which cause and effect coincide) and represents the exemplary emergence of finite individual life: it is an indivisible whole, in which the spirit cannot see any distinction between form (the concept) and content (the object). The immanent relation between form and content allows the organism to be itself

[136] «La filosofia, che è questo farsi cosciente della libertà al di fuori del rapporto vivente naturale con le cose, passa dunque necessariamente per una fase di *estraneazione alla vita,* alla quale solo la visione nella continuità fra gli estremi della soggettività e dell'oggettività pone termine: Così la filosofia, giunta alla coscienza dell'unità nella prassi umana di criticismo e dogmatismo, chiamando l'uomo a scegliere in favore del soggetto e dell'idealità (quindi della penetrazione della natura da parte di un ordine razionale *conscio*), pone termine alla fase *speculativa* che vede il sapere come conoscenza di una realtà estranea alla vita propria dell'uomo, e riconduce se stessa *all'interno della vita.* In questo senso la filosofia, intesa come riflessione che comincia necessariamente con la contrapposizione teoretica del'Io al non-Io, è un male, uno squilibrio che deve essere eliminato ritornando nel seno della vita, dell'azione e interazione con le cose in quanto facenti parte della stessa *sfera* dell'uomo»; F. Moiso, *Vita natura libertà. Schelling (1795-1809),* op. cit., 59-60.

in its individuality and totality, completeness and unity, and echoes Schelling's analysis of Plato's *Timaeus.*

However, Schelling seems to abandon the platonic idea of the demiurge, the artifex of the union of form and matter, adopting a position much closer to the Christian theology of creation. Schelling writes that the fundament of nature cannot rest upon a finality that was externally introduced in nature by a supreme architect. God as creator, is not a mere demiurge, but an infinite force from which everything stems, including the teleological principle and the intellect in which this principle is placed. God neither introduces in matter form and finality, nor he simply informs the human spirit with this principle. God creates the ontological horizon of every teleological possibility that unfolds in ourselves and in our intellect (SW II, 44-45; IPN 33-35).

Schelling's analysis leads us beyond the immanent relation between form and content: Schelling shares with us his constant and passionate desire to understand how it is possible to comprehend infinity from within finiteness, as the mysterious and wonderful aspect of their relation. In order to deal with "the sheer wonder *(Zauber)* which surrounds the problem of the origin of the organic bodies" we must find the way to think necessity *(Nothwendigkeit)* and contingency *(Zufälligkeit):* "Necessity, because their very existence *(Daseyn)* is purpositive, not only their form (as in the work of art), contingency, because this purposiveness is nevertheless actual *(wirklich)* only for an intuiting and reflecting being." (SW II, 47; IPN 35). The organism can be conceived as a unity of necessity and contingency only if there is an original unity of spirit (that thinks and reflects) and self-organizing matter. The unity of infinite and finite can be conceived and grasped through a reflection on the organism. The organism truly represents a constant and dynamic union of concept and action, project and execution.

Thus through our reflection on the organism we can leave aside dogmatic philosophy and move forward, aiming at a new philosophy capable of grasping the unity of finite and infinite within finiteness, that is, within our necessary and temporal existence. Schelling himself explains this point: "Here first a premonition came over man of his own nature, in which intuition and concept, form and object, ideal and real, are originally one and the same. Hence the peculiar aura which surrounds this problem, an aura which the philosophy of mere reflection *(Reflexionphilosophie),* which sets out only to separate, can never develop, whereas the pure intuition, or rather, the creative imagination *(schöpferische Einbildungskraft),* long since discovered the symbolic language, which one has only to construe in order to discover that Nature speaks to us more intelligibly the less we think of her in a merely reflective way." (Ibid.).

Only a radical and bold return to life can create a philosophy capable of overcoming theoretical and dogmatic speculation and the original separation. The dogmatic and critical philosophies broke the original unity of necessity and contingency. This tradition, in order to re-enact and repeat the dynamics of form and matter, of concept and intuition, and the original bestowing of reality on what originally was sealed within an indistinct and indifferent sphere, must be left aside. Schelling's new philosophy returns to creative and productive imagination: the original synthesis of indifference through intuition. This creative imagination has been expressed through a symbolic language and its non-logical, non-conceptual and non-theoretical innermost meaning.

Schelling's new vision, on the brink of his speculative turning point, is characterized by a thought aiming at the construction of a philosophy of the spirit and of a philosophy of nature whose connection is assured by the organism, that is, by the concrete example and the manifestation of the unity of necessity and contingency that is ideally real in the spirit: *"Mind,* considered as the principle of life is called *soul.* [...] We do not ask how in general a connection is possible between soul and body […] but rather –what one can understand and must answer– how the idea of such a connection has arisen *in us*." (SW II, 51; IPN 38).

This is the realization of the program of the *Vom Ich,* in which the "I am" was the ontological side of the opposition between the I and the not I. Now the I has all the faculties of existence (thought, will, representation, life): it must not become an absolute, but it must recognize and re-enact its absolute intimacy with itself, within an immanent and non-theoretical philosophy: "But now I maintain that there can be only an *immediate* knowledge of being and life, and that what *is* and *lives* only is and lives insofar as it first and foremost exists for itself, is aware of its life through being alive. Suppose, then, that there appears to me in my perception an organic being, freely self-moving, then I certainly know that this being *exists,* that it is *for me,* but not that it *exists for itself and in itself.* For life can as little be represented outside life as consciousness outside consciousness." (SW II, 52; IPN 39).

The I, in order to become itself, must recognize that the opposition between the I and the not-I takes place within the I, and it is the I: separation stems from the I itself. "It is also obvious that I am persuaded of a life and self-existence outside me only *practically.* I must in practice be *compelled* to acknowledge beings outside me, who are like me. If I were not compelled to enter into the company of people outside me and into all the practical relationships associated with that; if I did not know that beings, who resemble me in external shape and appearance, have no *more* reason to acknowledge freedom and mentality in me than I have to acknowledge the same in them; in fine, if I were not aware that my moral existence only

acquires purpose and direction through the existence of other moral beings outside me, then left to mere speculation, I could of course doubt whether humanity dwelt behind each face and freedom within each breast." (SW II, 52-53; IPN 39).

The original separation can be overcome by thinking this separation as such, in its identity and difference. Separation must be anticipated by an immediate vision capable of reuniting in one element the two positions, and to see the productive realization of the indifferent ideal. Schelling's new philosophy leaves behind theoretical speculation in favor of productive imagination, that unites nature and spirit. Productive imagination is the faculty of the unity of separation and the origin of separation. For what "we want is not that Nature should coincide with the laws of our mind *by chance* (as if through some *third* intermediary), but that *she herself,* necessarily and originally, should not only *express,* but *even realize,* the laws of our mind, and that she is, and is called, Nature only insofar as she does so." (SW II, 55-56; IPN 41-42).

Every philosophy that is based on the idea of a correspondence paradoxically presupposes and does not comprehend separation; it cannot understand the reciprocal and mutual relation between the two terms. If nature is originally welcomed and realized within our spirit, separation will be understood in its being-for-us, and we will understand ourselves as being-for-separation. This idea is the key to understand Schelling's last sentence: "Nature should be Mind made visible, Mind the invisible Nature. Here then, in the absolute identity of Mind *in us* and Nature *outside us,* the problem of the possibility of a Nature external to us must be resolved." (Ibid).

2. Philosophy of Nature and Aesthetics

Schelling's transcendental idealism aims at comprehending nature through a repetition of the unity and identity of difference. Schelling does not abandon finiteness and contingency to a meaningless and incomprehensible destiny, as he tries to absorb them in the non-speculative idea of the conditional-unconditional unity. Schelling reacts to the defeat suffered by intellect and theoretical reason reaffirming human freedom within the transcendental symbiosis of man and nature, visible nature and invisible spirit. Freedom is the fundament that stems from man's position within separation and it is the faculty that allows him to overcome his situation. The clash between nature and spirit, which is a tragic conflict, must be harmonized and subsequently dissolved in the immediate vision of unity and difference as such, that is, in the indivisibility of the conditional-unconditional (visible-invisible) relation. It is necessary to understand how man remains free once he understands that nature belongs to man's invisible

essence (spirit) and that man belongs to the visible essence of nature (Nature).

First of all we must think about both spirit and nature (I and not-I; subjective and objective; SW II, 61; IPN 46) *before* they become themselves (opposed and reunited in their identity); we must conceive them in their initial and original condition, in which they are not spirit and nature yet. *What must be thought of the quid that was before difference?* Schelling's philosophy of identity emanates from this question, resembling the dialectic movement outlined in the *Vom Ich.* Infinity and finiteness conform themselves reciprocally within one and only act. Invisible infinity expands itself *(expandieren sick)* in a multiplicity, while visible finiteness is being absorbed by subjectivity, and shrouds its form in obscurity.

Conformation (Einbildung) and *re-conformation (Wiedereinbildung)* bestow and remove form, visibility and image: they must be reunited by a philosophy that comprehends nature in itself *(natura naturans)* and nature as phenomenon *(natura naturata).* Phenomenal nature is the visible manifestation and the symbol of invisible being, unfolding itself through separation and subjective-objective opposition. (SW II, 66-67; IPN 50). Secondly, the spirit must find a place outside of itself where it can objectify its self-intuition, that is, the process of the objectification of the subject-object unity that the philosopher subjectively grasps through intellectual intuition. Art shall realize the objectification of the *mysterium* that philosophy subjectively conceives as the identity of identity and separation.

The object of Schelling's philosophy, before the elaboration of his philosophy of nature[137], is still separation as such, and its invisible unity. However, Schelling's philosophy of nature confirms once again the positive value of otherness and the fecundity of its paradoxical status. Merleau-Ponty wrote: "Il y a une dignité du fin positif. Il est quelque chose que l'infini produit par une scission interne, le résultat d'une contradiction féconde. Le rapport entre le fini et l'infini n'est pas tel q'on ne puisse les mettre dans un ordre linéaire"[138]. This relation is always circular, unending, endless and continuously productive.

Nature, in its duplicity, cannot be grasped either by speculative comprehension, or by a natural science that relies solely on reflection or on a logical and experimental apparatus. Nature must be re-conceived (leaving aside every linear vision of finiteness and temporality), within its relation of original co-belonging with infinity. Separation becomes nature (and this gap

[137] Schelling's systematic effort can be analyzed in his *Vom der Weltsee* of 1798 (SW II, 345-583), and in his *Erster Entwurf eines System der Naturphilosophie* (SW III, 1-268)

[138] M. Merleau-Ponty, *La nature. Notes. Cours du Collège de France* (Paris; Seuil, 1995), 61.

within totality grants man the possibility of his revolt), only after having acknowledged man's participative status. Nature is the space surrounding the action and the projects of freedom. Intellectual intuition, which is the organ of a pre-speculative philosophy that moves beyond difference, aiming at a perceptive and intuitive experience, can depend on this fundamental situation. In Merleau-Ponty's words: "aussi, pour retrouver notre proper nature dans l'état d'indivision où nos exerçons notre perception: 'tant que je suis *identique* à la Nature, je la comprends aussi bien que ma proprie vie'" [139].

Pre-objective being (the absolute) organizes, produces, in-forms and imparts visibility to the quid that would otherwise remain hidden through a movement that, thanks to the absolutely free and repeated *Einbilden* act, illuminates the condition in which man and nature are reciprocally bound. Pre-objective being also allows man to re-enact the *Widereinbildung,* and its metaphysical orbit, through the philosophy of transcendental idealism. This fundamental and circular relation between man and nature is *the beginning of meaning,* that shows the possibility of its conformation (infinity turned into finiteness) and re-conformation (finiteness grasping infinity)[140].

In the interplay between the visible and the invisible we once again find the interplay between meaning and meaninglessness. The condition of possibility is conceived within the pre-conceptual horizon ("l'on redécouvre la Nature dans notre expérience perceptive avant la réflexion") that precedes the distinction between subjectiveness and objectiveness and that is the condition of meaning. Schelling's philosophy can be called critical inasmuch it has overcome the capacity of the intellect to see reality as an external element and to build a corresponding categorical and conceptual structure: this philosophy aims at reaching the horizon within which subjective and objective are one and the same thing. This is the undetermined and absolute sphere of the Unitotality of unrealized possibilities.

This philosophy dares to grasp the absolute pre-conceptually and intuitively through finiteness and the paradoxical unity-difference of spirit and nature. Transcendental idealism needs a philosophy of nature providing an objective reality that could be absorbed in the ideal identity. The absolute, that cannot be expressed through a theoretical and speculative language, is shown within the fundamental and paradoxical relation of spirit and nature in which they are both transfigured in the *Ein-bildungs-kraft* dialectic. Finiteness, which is the visible with form and meaning, is a transparent element through which we can glimpse at the unconditional absolute (in its position within opposition) and at its annihilation provoked by a philosophy

[139] Ibid, 63.
[140] Ibid., 68.

that strives to comprehend our position within finiteness through a non-theoretical and non-speculative intuition.

Schelling's question about Art and Aesthetics stems from these conclusions. Merleau-Ponty, who followed Lukács's *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft,* saw in Schelling's idea and conception of art, the very organ of his non-theoretical philosophy: "La philosophie de la Nature a besoin d'un langage qui peut reprendre la Nature dans ce qu'elle a de moins humain, et qui, par là, serait proche de la poésie. L'art est la réalisation objective d'un contract avec le monde, qui ne peut être objectivé, tout comme la philosophie est la découverte d'un arrangement dont le sens est ouvert. En ce sens, comme le dit Schelling, l'art est le 'document' de la philosophie et son 'organe', et par document il faut entendre objectivation"[141].

Nature and spirit are opposed in their mutual belonging. Nature is characterized by the same inner relation that we find in reason: "the eternal unity of infinite and finite". This relation, which is analogous to the paradoxical unconditional-conditional relation, and that Schelling calls *essential* and *wonderful (wundersame Verein)*[142], is visible only trough finiteness and form: finite and infinite, within the Weltseele, are bound by a necessary relation: the true infinite element within infinity itself.

Infinity is infinite only as the absolute negation of nothingness or as its own absolute self-affirmation. The true infinite element –from the point of view of reality– is this *absolute bond (das absolute Band)* between finite and infinite (infinity and finiteness). The true absolute exceeds the absolute in itself, and inhabits the intersection of the two terms of the opposition, This essential relation can be understood only if it is actually realized, that is, only if the two terms are concretely bound together *(Verbundene)* (SW II, 361). The two terms can be simultaneously grasped and intuited by philosophy only if they are expressed in their *Verbundenheit* of unity and multiplicity, visible and invisible, infinite and form. We live within a separation, and we necessarily belong to this separation because there is an original identity, (the original condition of actual separation and opposition) that unfolds itself in a duplicity.

The absolute bond posits the separation between finite and infinite only if its annihilates itself *(sich sebst aufheben).* We can understand the two terms of the relation *as such* only if we comprehend the absolute necessity of separation *as such.* Schelling says that in the *Weltseele* there is the absolute bond's infinite self-love, or the infinite desire to reveal itself, that is

[141] Ibid., 71.

[142] F. W. Schelling, *Das Verhältniß des Realen und Idealen in der Nature* (Introduction to the *Weltseele);* (SW II, 360).

expressed in the world, which is the result of this eternal self-will: the world "shall manifest itself not as diverse from the absolute, but as the perfect *copula* in its progressive development" (SW II, 362).

Spirit and nature meet within this relation and within the essence of this bond, that expresses itself in this world: "the absolutely inseparable and irresolvable essence of the bond is identity in totality and totality in identity; [...]. The completeness of the determinations in every real thing is absolutely identical to the plenitude of the eternal in itself, which is the whole in identity and identity in totality" (SW II, 363). The two terms of the *Verbundenheit* reflect and suggest the absolute bond that conditions them: the bond appears through the reality of the opposition, that is, the realization of nature *(Verwirklichung in der Natur),* and can be grasped by an intuition that anticipated the theoretical attitude (SW II, 366-367).

This bond (in its separation) can be intuited and grasped through the realization of the two movements. If this realization originates from *the creative and productive nature* (the objective subject-object), *philosophy must be a philosophy of nature,* aiming at intuiting the original undivided state between ourselves and nature. This knowledge of nature shall later be expressed by the project for the development of a dynamical physics, that Schelling already outlined in his *Systemprogramm.* Merleau-Ponty correctly describes this development: "Mais ce cercle dialectique, qui nous fait passer sans cesse de l'intuition à la réflexion et de la réflexion à l'intuition, n'est pas un cercle vicieux. La dialectique intuition-refléxion n'est pas un échec par rapport à notre connaissance de l'Absolu. La circularité du savoir nous place non en face, mais au milieu de l'Absolu. L'Absolu n'est pas seulement l'Absolu, mai le mouvement dialectique du fini et de l'infini. [...] l'Absolu doit sortir de lui-même et se faire Monde. L'Absolu n'est que ce rapport de l'Absolu à nous-même. [...]. Schelling présente l'apparition de l'homme comme une espèce de recréation du monde, comme l'avènement d'une ouverture. [...]. Non seulement la Nature doit devenir vision, mais il faut que l'homme devienne Nature: 'Les philosophes, dans leurs visions, sont devenus Nature'. [...] Cet *insaissisable,* cet *englobant,* comme dirait Jaspers, est l'horizon de toute réflexion; il ne constitue pas ou ne doit pas constituer un domaine ouvert à une connaissance sensible. C'est un horizon auquel nous devons confronter le fini. [...] la philosophie de la Nature est tout autre chose , selon Schelling, qu'une théorie particulière: elle caractérise une attitude à l'égard de l'être donné"[143].

The realization comes from *the human spirit* (the subjective object-subject), and *philosophy must be a philosophy of art,* aiming at a pre-

[143] M. Merleau-Ponty, *La nature,* op. cit., 73-74.

theoretical intuition that can be achieved through the productive and creative function of art. Aesthetics is now ready to re-enact and repeat the steps of the conditions of possibility of its condition, aiming at that elusive and nonetheless present necessity. Aesthetics becomes a philosophical reflection that, from the realized product, arrives to its condition of possibility. This condition is the exceeding element that can be understood only through the attempt to grasp its paradoxical meaninglessness and its pre-speculative and pre-conceptual character.

Thus we must participate in the reason that bears witness to our own spirit, that is, to "what is immediately close, uniquely real, to which we belong and in which we are" (SW II, 377).

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Chapter 8

THE SYSTEM OF TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM (1800)

1. The Exposition of the Text.

Schelling's speculations on nature as an objective subject-object, and the creation of a philosophy of nature (the *Wissenschaftslehre* of objectiveness), left the fundamental question of the *objectification of the absolute,* stemming from the relation between transcendental idealism and philosophy of nature, unresolved and unanswered. How is it possible to express and represent objectively the absolute relation (i.e., the identity of difference, the unconditional as position of the opposition between the condition and the conditional)?

The transcendental philosopher thinks the identity of the two terms before the two terms themselves: they are opposed in order to be reunited. Thus the philosopher must express this identity through the effort of the free endeavor of the finite I (self) to intuit itself, which is a tension that coincides with its becoming itself. It seems that the spirit can express this self-intuition, which must be considered as the immediate and founding intuition of consciousness, only in an external ambit, in which the intuition can be objectified. But how philosophy can express this paradoxical identity *before* its real separation and its objectified representation? This representation must safeguard the concreteness of the *Realität* and must answer positively to the annihilation of finiteness[144].

If the philosopher comprehends only the objective becoming of the subject-object unity, then philosophy (being a *Wissenschaftlehere*), cannot

[144] F. Moiso, *Vita, natura libertà,* op. cit., 215-216.

show what it comprehends, because it does not objectively realize the subjective intuition of the identity of identity and separation. In order to achieve this goal, philosophy needs an organ. This organ is Art that must be turned into an *aesthetics.* This aesthetical transfiguration is developed in the *System:* Schelling shifts his hermeneutical position from the point of view of the identity-difference of the subjective-objective to the point of view of the indifference of subjective and objective.

In the introduction of the *System* Schelling expounds the general terms of the concept of transcendental philosophy, the foundation of his idealism, its necessity and its subsequent deduction[145]. Schelling begins, once again, from the point of view of *separation.* On the one hand there's the totality of the objective *(Objecktive)* and of the representable; on the other hand there's the I (or intelligence), which is the representing subjective *(Subjecktive).* Since the beginning can take place on both sides of the separation, and since every relative beginning implies a specific problem, the beginning itself is relative. If the beginning is objective the problem will be the problem of knowing how it is possible to achieve the *Übereinstimmung* (correspondence) with the oncoming *(Hinzukommeri)* of subjective. If the beginning is subjective, that problem will be the problem to know how it is possible to achieve the Übereinstimmung with the oncoming objective (SW III, 340-341; S 5-6).

Schelling presupposes the problem of form: "if an accord is possible between the objective and the subjective"; this is the problem of the correspondence of the opposites *(Entgegengesetze): how is this accord possible*? This accord is possible because the necessity deduced from modality coincides with the identity of the two opposite terms. Only the transition from the science of natural to the philosophy of nature and the relation of this philosophy with transcendental idealism explains the possibility and the modalities of this accord. Schelling deals with this problem when he explains the main task of philosophy: to cast light *on the accord in general:* "However, the problem only requires an explanation of the concurrence as such, and leaves it completely open as to where explanation starts from, as to which it should make primary and which secondary. –Yet since the two opposites are mutually necessary to each other, the result of the operation is bound to be the same, whichever point we set out from." (SW III, 342; S 7). In order to achieve this goal the *System* begins from the point of view of the subjective, aiming at the absolute

[145] *System des transzendentalen Idealismus (1800),* SW III, 327-634; trans, in English by Peter Heath, with an Introduction by Michael Vater, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800),* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997). (S). In this Edition "Ich" is translated by "Self, but we will use the Marti's translation "I" giving continuity to our thread of argument.

beginning of Nature and of the I, the beginning that dwells and that is representable in the subjective itself.

This task requires a transcendental philosophy that must meet the question of the immediate certainty of the existence of the external world through the questioning of the absolute and of the immediate position of consciousness. This position is expressed by the proposition *I am:* according to transcendental philosophy only the subjective is originally real. Schelling's transcendental philosophy separates the two propositions" "I am" and "there are things that exist outside myself", opposes them one against the other, and questions the separation that, in common consciousness, *is only felt.* Transcendental philosophy questions the correspondence of the two opposite terms (how is the correspondence between the I and the world possible?) pressing its way through the relative *Trennung* to reach the identity of the opposites that are opposites in the transcendental philosophy, but not in their origin. "Transcendental cognition *(das transzendentale Wissen)* [...] separates the two propositions, I *exist,* and *There are things outside me,* which in ordinary consciousness are fused together; setting *(vorsetzt)* the one before the other, precisely in order to prove their identity, and so that it can really exhibit the immediate connection *(unmittelbare Zusammenhang),* which is otherwise merely felt. By this very act of separation *(Trennung),* if complete, it shifts into the transcendental mode of apprehension, which is in no way natural, but artificial *(künstliche).*" (SW III, 344; S 9).

The *Transzendentalephilosophie,* questioning itself within its own reflection, becomes the knowledge of knowledge: it posits the separation between the I and the world, breaking the natural unity and künstlich, creating the dissension between the two, and points out their immediate connection in order to elaborate *(subjectively and consciously)* a concept of the object. This concept is deduced *going through (hindurch herblicken)* the intuitive datum and through the continuous steps of its own intuition of itself. This operation carried out from within the condition of separation (which is the subjective beginning of philosophy), affirms both the Trennung and the correspondence of object and subject.

Schelling reformulates the general philosophical problem from the transcendental point of view, aiming at clarifying the possibility of knowledge: *"how can we think both of presentations (Vorstellungen) as conforming to objects, and objects as conforming to presentations?"* (SW III, 348; S 11). It is necessary to clarify the encounter of the representing and of the represented. *Since the world exists outside ourselves* (realism), and *since the I (the self) has the capacity to project its representations outside of itself* (idealism), we must understand: i) how the correspondence of representations and objects possible (theoretical philosophy); ii) how the

determination of the objects (and their conformity to our representational faculty) by our determination (practical philosophy) are possible.

Theoretical and practical philosophy cannot comprehend the possibility of knowledge because they both move from two relative points of view. They also cannot understand the principle of identity that founds the correspondence between the I and the world. We must find the principle that can reunite the conscious activity of the subject (the will) and the unconscious and spontaneous activity of nature within the sphere of transcendental philosophy. The productive activity of consciousness is an activity that must be called aesthetical, in contrast with the idea of an activity conceived within the sphere of the real world. Otherwise it would be necessary to postulate an harmony of ends within the whole of nature, that is, a teleology extraneous to the transcendental reflection of consciousness.

This aesthetic activity realizes the premises of the *Briefe,* in which the aesthetical dimension was the ambit of the transcendental reflection through which it is possible to think the opposition in its paradoxical unity and in our tragic condition within the realm of experience. The productive activity of the identity of the conscious and the unconscious is called by Schelling *aesthetical.* This activity, through the consciousness of the I, produces *(hervorbringt)* objects (the works of art) that show the identity that no speculative philosophy can represent: the identity of the production that is and common to the subject (consciously) and to the object (unconsciously): "Thus philosophy depends as much as art does on the productive capacity, and the difference between them rests merely on the different direction taken by the productive force. For whereas in art the production is directed outwards, so as to reflect the unknown by means of products, philosophical production is directed immediately inwards, so as to reflect it in intellectual intuition. The proper sense by which this type of philosophy must be apprehended is thus the *aesthetic* sense, and that is why the philosophy of art is the true *organon* of philosophy." (SW III, 351; S 13-14).

In order to comprehend the condition of possibility of the accord between the representing I and the represented world, we must describe the act of the internal construction of the subject, as the original activity of the I. It is also necessary to clarify the principle of this activity that makes the accord with nature possible. "Two conditions are therefore required for the understanding of philosophy, first that one be engaged in a constant inner activity, a constant producing of these original acts of the intellect; and second, that one be constantly reflecting upon this production; in a world, that one always remains at the same time both the intuited (the producer) and the intuitant." (SW III, 350-351; S 13).

Schelling wants to understand the objective-subjective opposition using a principle that is common to the two terms. This principle is the *production* of

the objective and the simultaneous visible manifestation difference of the opposites: this difference in its transparency, *makes the absolute visible.* Productive activity is unconscious, unintentional and spontaneous in nature, and conscious and intentional in man. If man's productive activity is turned inwards, the result is a philosophy "which makes the real world vanish before our eyes" in order to affirm the infinite self-positing of the I in the intellectual intuition. If this productive activity is turned outwards, the result is the expression of the unconscious tensions and their unification with the conscious element, that is, the *realization* of the objective through the subjective).

Immediately after the *Introduction,* Schelling establishes the fundamental principle of transcendental idealism. The principle of representational knowledge (the correspondence between subject and object within which we are sealed) must be sought within knowledge itself. Transcendental philosophy must comprehend self-consciousness, which is not a modality of being but a modality of knowledge, that corresponds to Schelling's distinction between the "I am" and the "I think" (SW III, 355-356; S 17).

According to Schelling being is the totality of objectiveness, and knowledge is the ambit of subjectiveness. Self-consciousness "it is not" (it is not objective) and it is the fundament of knowledge that determines every being: it is a *form of knowledge:* "Even admitting that this self-consciousness were merely the modification of a being independent of it, a thing that no philosophy, to be sure, can render intelligible, *it is no kind of being (Art des Seins)* for me at present, but rather *a kind of knowledge (Art des Wissens)* and *only in this capacity do I consider it here.*" (SW III, 357; S 18).

The philosophy of the *System* reflects on the principle of knowledge, and not on the principle of being: is a transcendental philosophy, and not a philosophy of nature. Only in a second stage it will be necessary to decide "whether we shall have more success in getting from knowledge to being, in deriving everything objective from a knowledge previously assumed as autonomous only for purposes of our science, and in thereby raising it to absolute independence– whether we shall do better in this than the dogmatist does in the opposite endeavor, of bringing forth knowledge from a being assumed as independent– the sequel must decide." (SW III, 358; S 19).

Thus the principle of transcendental philosophy is a principle in which content is conditioned by form, and form in turn by content, each in reciprocity (SW III, 360; S 20). The deduction of the principle envisions the proposition of identity (A=A) as the proposition that gives form to every determined knowledge and assigns a position to every particular object, *regardless to the fact that A means something or not.* This proposition is what we know unconditionally, and conditions the possibility of the presence of the object in our knowledge, in its correspondence to a

determined proposition that Schelling calls synthetic. Our real knowledge is formed by synthetic propositions in a relation of *correspondence* with objectiveness. In order to consider these propositions within this situation, there must be a point in which identical propositions and synthetic propositions are *immediately* identical. In this point object and concept, object and representation, representing subjective and represented objective must be one and the same thing.

This point is *self-consciousness:* the sphere in which separation finds its conciliation and its condition of being. Within self-consciousness thought and being coincide, in the original act in which the I thinks itself and becomes its own object. This self-objectification, in which thought and its content coincide is the core of the ambit that we call self-consciousness. The concept of the I draws a distinction between empirical consciousness and self-consciousness. Consciousness is what is identical in representations, and it gives to the subject the possibility to be self-conscious as a representative subject. Self-consciousness is the original act antecedent to every representation: it is the pure position of every possible proposition (SW III, 366-367; S 24-26). The concept of consciousness is atypical: it does not correspond to any object and cannot be represented: it is referred to an unconditional that cannot be considered as a thing *(Ding),* and realized only through a particular act of freedom. The I cannot be conceived either as an object among objects, or as something external to thought itself. The thought that thinks the I must coincide with the self. The concept of the I is a non-discursive intuition that produces its own object through a free and unconditional act.

The *faculty (Vermögen) of intellectual intuition,* that freely and spontaneously produces the content of its intuition (the I) in the moment in which the subject of the intuition (the I), intuits itself as an object. Theoretical philosophy finds the object of its knowledge outside itself. Transcendental philosophy, aiming at the subjective principle of the separation between the subjective and the objective, must produce its object through the original and unconditional act of the self-construction of the I. Transcendental philosophy thinks its own production (SW III, 368; S 27).

The proposition I=I expresses how the I is being produced, how it steps out of identity and intuits itself as its own object. It is a synthetic proposition because it derives from the objectification of its condition and corresponds to the identical proposition A=A. This proposition expresses the identity of the producing and of its product, and their mutual opposition. Schelling explains the difference between these two propositions (A=A; I=I) with the concept of *the original duplicity of identity.* Identity is: i) absolute, if it indicates what is unconditionally and immediately posited as the possibility of position; ii) synthetic, if it indicates the opposition produced by this

absolute positability. This duplicity is a peculiar aspect of self-consciousness, which is the source of every dynamics between object and subject: "Thus the proposition I=I converts the proposition A=A into a synthetic proposition, and we have found the point at which identical knowledge springs immediately from synthetic, and synthetic from identical. [...] Hence that principle must be expressed in the proposition *I=I*, since this very proposition is *the only one there can be* that is simultaneously both identical and synthetic." (SW III, 372; S 30).

The A=A identity formally conditions the I=I synthesis and both these two propositions respond to the original duplicity of self-consciousness. Within the sphere of self-consciousness the original duplicity of the unconditional (A=A) and of the conditional (I=I) must be present. It is unconditional inasmuch it represents the absolute formal principle of the position in itself (and therefore of the opposition), and it is conditional inasmuch it represents the principle of production (realized opposition, which is formally identical to the absolute).

This interpretation is confirmed by Schelling's *Annotations,* in which he says that the I is the *principle of all reality (Princip aller Realität).* The I is not a thing or an object because it is the being of everything (and of every object), the primeval act that brings into existence things within space. The I is both eternal becoming (objectively), and infinite production (subjectively). The I is not a thing because it's an activity, and this activity *is an infinite act of bringing forth;* the I "it is not" because it is the absolutely free condition of every being that becomes objective "Since the I actually possesses none of the predicated that attach to things, we have an explanation of the paradox that one cannot say of the I that it *exists.* For one cannot say of the I that it exists, precisely because it is *being-itself.* The eternal, timeless act of self-consciousness which we call I, is that which gives all things existence, and so itself needs no other being to support it; [...] it appears objectively as *eternal becoming,* and subjectively as a *producing without limit.*" (SW III, 376; S 32).

The I is therefore the principle of transcendental idealism. It shows that I=I is equivalent to the proposition "I am" and says that "everything that exists at all will be able to do so only for the I, and there will be no other reality *(Realität)* whatsoever." (SW III, 377; S 34). From the point of view of transcendental philosophy, idealism confirms that the opposition is real within self-consciousness, and that this opposition becomes effective (that is, determined in space and time) only because existence (being) stems from a self-consciousness *that internally limits itself (innere Beschränktheit).* The object that opposes itself to the I is the product of the I itself reacting *to the violent feeling* of constriction caused by the duplicitous character of its activity.

The I must be free to act infinitely, but since its first activity is to think itself, through this thinking the I becomes an object to itself. Thus constriction and freedom are the two aspects of the necessity contained in the I, which, while intuits itself, limits itself and distances itself from itself, establishing its opposition with the world. At the same time the I intuits itself as a *quid* which acts infinitely. The I, in order to be self-consciousness, must become its own object, and must recognize as posited the internal opposition, that is, self-intuition. Thus the I *posits the real opposition (reelle Entgegensetzung);* this is the original act of its existence and of the existence of the world: "*But the I cannot limit its producing without opposing something to itself.* In that the I limits itself as producing, *it becomes something to itself, that is, it posits itself.* But all positing is a determinate positing. [...] and so every determination *(Bestimmung)* is a blotting-out of absolute reality, that is, negation. [...] Hence, in the concept of positing we also necessarily think the concept of a counterpositing, and thus in the action of self-positing we likewise have a positing of something opposed to the I; and only for this reason is the act of self-positing at once both identical and synthetic." (SW III, 381; S 36-37).

The I, in order to be, must limit itself producing the opposition and removing itself as infinite activity. At the same time the I continues to be the I, that is, it continues to infinitely overcome its limit, and to exceed its own being. Intuiting and limiting itself, the I makes the limit real and ideal at the same time. Transcendental idealism, that conceives these activities founds the *ideal-realism.* In the two following sections, Schelling analyzes the two systems of practical and theoretical philosophy of transcendental idealism.

The first system deals with the deduction of the absolute synthesis expounding the way to reach the I through self-consciousness and to ideal-real position of the not-I (the world). Identity (A=A) is the beginning of transcendental idealism, and the principle "I=I=I am" brings back reality to the condition of possibility of knowledge. Every reality is for the I, including what we call external reality, that has a meaning and an existence only in its relation to an I that thinks and posits. The relation between the I and external reality is a relation based on limitation *(Begrenzung).* The contraposition of external reality is the consequence of the fact that the I, (the crossroad of two opposed activities) is the condition of being, that is, of its own self-limitation. Reality is external only because the I posited it. The difference between the I as infinite activity (or infinite further possibility), and the finite limitation of the I arises only because the I thinks and limits itself: the I and reality become objective. This activity was originally infinite and comprehended every possibility, and becomes finite when the I posits itself in its own activity.

According to Schelling the I intuits itself as unlimited and "*the I is limited only through the fact that it is unlimited.* [...] We could deduce the bounded character of the I only as a condition of its unboundedness. But now the boundary is a condition of unboundedness only inasmuch as it is extended to infinity. But the I cannot extend the boundary without acting upon it, and cannot act upon it unless the boundary exists independently of this action. Hence the boundary becomes real, only through the assault *(das Ankämpfen)* of the I against it." (SW III, 38; S 39). This infinite position of the limit indicates its ideal and real character, and explains that the arising of self-consciousness in the I coincides with the positing of the limit and its overcoming.

Self-consciousness is a synthetic activity determined by the struggle and the opposition between two irreducible and related activities: the endeavor of the I to step out of itself and to objectify the external and its simultaneous tendency to turn inwards and to return in itself through self-intuition. Thus the I intuits itself while producing the object and the possibility of objectiveness. This struggle *(Streit)* within the I is always self-consciousness, which is the place within which the separation *(Trennung)* becomes a necessary contrast *(Widerstreit)* between the subjective and the objective (SW III, 391-392; S 44-45).

How is it possible for transcendental philosophy (the gap of the subjective) to reach the original and natural unity of subject and object through this contrast? According to Schelling this is possible only through the interruption, through reflection, of the transition from one representation to another. This reflection suspends the representational process aiming at the original act that sets the becoming process in motion. Transcendental philosophy goes back to the original point of the action aimed both at the internal and the external. Transcendental philosophy *repeats* the events of this progressive separation: "Philosophy as such is therefore nothing else but the free imitation, the free recapitulation *(Wiederholung)* of the original series of acts into which the one act of self-consciousness evolves." (SW III 397-398; S 49).

The return to the original is the repetition of the beginning and of the birth of the opposition, and makes us aware of the necessity of the opposition between two struggling elements: "Self-consciousness (the I) is a conflict of absolutely opposed activities. The one that originally reaches out into infinity we shall call the real, objective, limitable activity; the other, the tendency to intuit oneself in that infinity, is called the ideal, subjective, illimitable activity." (Ibid.).

This is the beginning of the history of *self-consciousness.* The three ages of self-consciousness correspond to the stages of the repetition of the opposition. Schelling describes what happens in the common intellect

comparing it to the dogmatic intellect. In the latter objectivity is found in something that is external to the I: the limit is something of *Gefundene*. The dogmatic intellect places itself from the point of view of the object, that is, limitation, and reaches the conclusion that limitation is independent from the free and absolute capability of the I to posit its own limit. Those who philosophize "know that the limitation of the objective has its sole ground in the intuitant or subjective. The *intuiting I as such* does not and cannot know this, as now becomes clear. Intuiting and limiting are originally one. But the I cannot simultaneously intuit and intuit itself as intuiting, and so cannot intuit itself as limiting either. It is therefore necessary that the intuitant, which seeks only itself in the objective, should find the negative element therein to be something not posited by itself." (SW III, 403; S 54).

According to Schelling, if we follow the dogmatic point of view we will attribute to the not-I the same characteristics of the I. This is clearly impossible: the I finds the not-I through the feeling *(Empfinden)* of finding itself, *and therefore the limiting object is within the I.* To say that "the opposite is the I, means that it is absolutely opposed, to the I; that the I finds something to be opposed to it, means that it is opposed to the I only with respect to its finding, and the manner thereof; and so indeed it is." (SW III, 404; S 55). The I *finds* the original separation and opposition within itself. This finding is not a presence mediated by a representation. The I has an empathic relation with its own duplicitous nature. The I finds and it is found, feels and it is felt as *an immediate, and not mediated, presence (unmittelbar Gegenwärtiges schlechthin Unvermitteltes).* As immediate awareness of the opposition-difference: "The I as infinite tendency to self-intuition finds in itself as the intuited, or, what comes to the same thing [...], finds in itself something alien to it. But what, then, is found (or felt) in this finding? The felt, or sensed, is in fact again only the I itself. Everything sensed is immediately present and absolutely unmediated, as is already implicit in the concept of sensation. The I indeed finds something opposed, but this latter, after all, is only in itself." (SW III, 405; S 55).

The I has an empathic relation with itself and not with the object: it loses itself in the abyss of consciousness *(Begrentz-seyn).* The I feels and finds in itself a suspension of activity: through this suppression the I feels itself as limited, and *inasmuch limited and immediately present the I* knows and repeats its absolute infinity. The action of self-consciousness produces the original limitation: our finiteness is the condition of possibility of the object and its representation (i.e., determined limitation and theoretical relation). External objectiveness is possible only if the I's internal duplicity projects the limitation onto what meets the I. External being stems from the experience of being limited of the I. "Now if the I always senses only its own suspended activity, the sensed is nothing distinct from the I; the latter is

merely sensing itself, a fact to which ordinary philosophical parlance has already given expression, in that it speaks of the sensed as something purely subjective." (SW III, 405; S 56).

The I feels itself as limited, and also feels this limitation within itself. This is the reason why Schelling believes that there must be a way out from the sphere of determination within determination itself. Schelling writes: "If we reflect upon what happens in every sensation *(Empfindung),* we shall find that in each there must be something that *knows* about the impression, but is yet independent thereof and goes out beyond it; for even the judgment that the impression *(Eindruck)* proceeds from an objects presupposes an activity which does not attach to the impression, but is directed, rather, to something *beyond* the impression. The I does not sense, therefore, unless it contains an activity that *goes out beyond the limit*" (SW III, 413; S 62).

The I must possess the capability to exceed the truth of this kind of adequacy. This exceeding element is the original and initial activity of the I that posits its limit because it feels it. The I posits this limit aiming at its overcoming questions the perception of the limit itself. The I feels and determines the limit at the same time. This determination is a production that limits the I and makes it aware of this limitation. The I is passive and active at the same time: this duplicity is transformed into the tension towards identity that takes place between the (ideal) overcoming of the limit and the (real) becoming limited). This continuous and contradictory activity creates a third activity: *production.* This production is both internal and external to the limit. Production makes visible what was invisible (the original unity of the opposites): it is an activity that presses on its own limit in order to overcome it. The limit is made visible in its duplicity. Its overcoming is also a return to the ideal activity of the I, which is the principle of every opposition.

The I is therefore within and without the limit. This paradoxical position is not a position of the empirical world, but a self-feeling and self-being that is the origin of every position and every action. This feeling obscurely perceives the maximum proximity of identity and separation: "The I is everything that it is solely for itself. It is thus also ideal only for itself, ideal only insofar as it posits or recognizes itself to be such. If by ideal activity we mean only the activity of the I as such, so far as it simply proceeds therefrom and is grounded solely therein, the I is originally nothing but ideal activity. If the boundary falls within the I, it falls assuredly within the ideal activity thereof. But this ideal activity, which is limited, and insofar as it is limited, is not recognized as ideal, precisely because it is limited. We recognize as ideal that activity only which goes, and insofar as it goes, beyond the boundary. [...] the I as sensing (i.e., as subject) shall become an object; and there is no resolving this contradiction *unless* it be that *bound-breaking and becoming*

bounded are one and the same for the ideal I, or unless the I become real, precisely through its being ideal." (SW III, 418-419; S 66).

We must point out that the separation takes place within the I: the I in itself and that the world (or thing) in itself is nothing but the subjective and objective aspect of the activity of the I. The I is not the subjective and objective aspect of the real counterposited phenomena. The contraposition between the I and the thing stems from the limitation of the activity of the I. The contraposition is possible because there is "[...] one and same boundary [which] limits both I and thing, i.e., that the thing is limited only so far as the I is, and the I only so far as the thing is, in short, this *interdetermination,* in the present act, of activity and passivity in the I, is perceived only by the philosopher" (SW III, 425; S 71). The I feels its limitation, and it is limited: when the thing obtains reality *(Realität erlangen),* enters into its sphere *(Erscheinung).* Thus the thing appears to be real, in its accidental appearance, in its relation *(Bezug)* of separation from the I, with which now shares its limitation.

The overcoming of the contraposition established by the I is possible only if this contraposition takes place within the activity aiming at its overcoming. The transcendental philosopher begins its journey from this paradox, and ends with a transition to aesthetics: "give me a nature made up of opposed activities, of which one reaches out into the infinite, while the other tries to intuit itself in this infinitude, and from that I will bring forth for you the intelligence, with the whole system of its presentations." (SW III, 427; S 72-73).

The goal is to reach that region of consciousness in which the separation between the internal and the external is not yet, and in which the two terms of this separation are united. This region (this point) must be seen with a not-sensory intuition (which is not a perception) that brings forth the activity of production, and that makes it visible showing the unity and the difference of consciousness and its content: *"That* the opposition as such enters consciousness, or that the two opposites do so as absolute (and not merely relative) opposites, is the condition of productive intuition *(produktive Anschauung)."* (SW III, 433; S 77).

The I sees opposition as the struggle that dramatically defines our situation within this world. The two terms of the opposition (the I in its objective activity and the thing-in-itself with its pretense of independence form the world) must be seen in their relation. This is not enough: the opposition must be intuited for what it really is, and it must be brought back to its identity. The intuition of the opposition is the first and ultimate step casting light on the identity of the opposites. The two terms must be conceived as two activities, and not as objective entities. This is the only way to think identity in its difference: "For in virtue of the original identity

of its nature, the I cannot intuit the opposition without again importing identity into it, and hence a reciprocal relation of I to thing and thing to I. [...] So the thing, as so far derived, is still always a live and active affair, and not yet the passive, inert item encountered in appearance." (SW III, 434; S78).

Objectiveness and subjectiveness (activity and passivity) are two aspects of the I; objectiveness is its infinite extension, and subjectiveness is its return to itself. These two elements are both engaged in the dramatic struggle led by identity against its own self-realization. The product is the result of the struggle of these two activities.

From the point of view of transcendental philosophy, the motion of Schelling's mechanism shows what philosophy can understand *opposition,* which is the absolute protagonist of Schelling's thought. The main difficulty is represented by the harmonization of the philosophical point of view, placed within separation, and the point of view of the absolute I, which is both an (exceeding) presence within separation, and the quid which is the original condition of its possibility.

This is the paradox underlying every Schelling's step. The role of the production of the I raises the question concerning the distinction between what is necessary and what is contingent in its process, and concerning the opposition and its two terms. "The necessary factor in production therefore lies in the opposition as such; the contingent, in the limit of this opposition. But this is nothing else but the communal boundary lying between I and thing. The boundary is common, that is, it is a boundary no less for the thing than for the I." (SW III, 458; S 97).

The limit is *common* to the I and to the thing; the limit unites the two terms in a relation of contraposition. This contraposition (considered in itself) is the necessary element for the process through which the invisible becomes visible. The I acts freely according to its own necessity, modifying and positing itself in the position of the opposition. In doing so, the I steps out of itself, and gets out of obscurity of its absolute position and makes itself visible, making the opposition, in its necessity for the contingency of its two terms (that become unrestricted subject and object) visible.

Schelling once again expounds the same mechanism: intuition is external to the limit in the thing-in-itself and internal to the limit in the I: "Inner sense is thus nothing else but the illimitable tendency of the I, posited therein from the very outset, to self-intuition; and at this point is distinguished only for the first time as inner sense, and thus as the same activity which, in the foregoing act, was immediately limited by its overstepping of the boundary. [...] The thing-in-itself likewise makes no more appearance in consciousness than does the act of outer intuition; repressed from consciousness by the sensory object, it is simply an ideal explanatory ground of consciousness,

and like the acts of the intelligence itself, lies, for intelligence, beyond consciousness." (SW III, 460, 461; S 98-99).

Separation is the ambit of the object and of the inner intuition that allows the I to be an entity capable of perception. The I, in order to comprehend itself within the absolute unity-identity, must consciously become the object of its own inner intuition. Schelling reaches the ambit of the possibility of the opposition between the I and the object. The I is really limited by the object: this is possible because there must be a condition of possibility that makes the limitation felt as such before the determination of the two terms of the opposition. The limit between the I and the object, being conditioned and contingent, must have stemmed from a previous and antecedent condition of possibility. The I is forced to go back to the necessary moment that preceded consciousness *(Es fühlt sich zurückgetrieben)*. In this moment constriction lays upon its essential tension that the I feels in its limitation within its relation with the object. This feeling is the sentiment of the present *(das Gefühlt der Gegenwart):* "The common boundary of I and object, the ground of the second limitation, forms the boundary between the present stage and a past one. The feeling of being thus driven back to a stage that it cannot in reality return to is the feeling of the *present*" (SW III, 465; S 103).

This sentiment expresses the dynamic presence of the I in the opposition. The I withdraws and contracts itself. The sentiment through which the I is present to itself is the origin of consciousness. The inner sense of *time* (which is also the sentiment through which the I withdraws in itself) is the condition of the opposition, in which the I extends itself in *space*: "Inner sense is nothing else but the I's activity driven back into itself. If we consider inner sense as absolutely unrestricted by outer, the I will be in its highest state of feeling, its whole illimitable activity concentrated, as it were, upon a single point. [...] Inner sense, considered in its unrestrictedness, will thus be represented by the *point,* the absolute boundary, or by the image of *time* in its independence of space. [...] The opposite of the point, or absolute extensity, is the negation of all intensity, viz., infinite *space,* likewise the dissolved I." (SW III, 467; S 104).

Time and space, present and becoming are synthetically reunited and objectified *(herauskommen)* by the production, which is the expression of that accord between the feeling of being limited and the situation of being in a limitation. The artistic product is the exemplary expression of this accord between the feeling of being in a present point and the movement within a relation of actual existence.

The I is the playground of the original duplicity. We are necessarily placed within a condition of duplicity and we necessarily endeavor to remove it in order to think the opposition in its absoluteness. Intelligence fights an infinite battle in which, in order to affirm itself, it must succumb to

its own very production, that stems from the necessity to affirm its identity: "The I is neither originally productive, nor is it even so by choise. It is a primary opposition, whereby the essence and nature of intelligence are constituted. But now the I originally is a pure and absolute identity, to which it must constantly seek to return; yet the return to this identity is yoked to the original duality, as to a condition never wholly overcome. Now as soon as the condition of producing, namely, duality, is given, the I must produce, and is compelled to do so, as surely as it is an original identity. So if there is a continual producing in the I, this is possible only in that the condition of all producing, that original conflict of opposing activities in the I, is reestablished *ad infinitum.*" (SW III, 479; S 113).

Knowledge rests on separation and on the endless struggle between intelligence and object. Transcendental philosophy cannot remove the opposition, but only expound and re-enact its paradoxical essence. This absolute opposition can find its relative synthesis only in the product that shows the original duplicity of the activities. The product also shows the absolute identity that the I necessarily loses, emanating from the interplay of these activities. Absolute identity and original duplicity coexist in the I, and this coexistence is the product, which is the visible manifestation of that identity-difference/unity-multiplicity that was irreparably lost in its original reality. Only the struggle, the endeavor to bring forth from an infinite and relative repetition and the symbol or the expression of what is no longer real, remains.

However, the I is aware that there is a universe that stems from its original opposition. The universe exists only *for* the consciousness of the I that feels its limitation. The representations of the objects, and the system of determined knowledge (that realizing the objective space-time structure obscures the original separation), appear only *after* and *through* the unceasing synthesis of the struggle.

We shall now leave aside the question concerning the necessity of organic nature (which unveils the organization of production), and we will analyze the overcoming of reflection and the fulfillment of the journey of transcendental philosophy. In order to comprehend the essential duplicity of unity and difference from which the paradoxical structure of separation and opposition stems, it is necessary to comprehend and to overcome the very being of consciousness. Schelling expounds his conception in the first pages of the *Third Age* of absolute synthesis. The problem of the correspondence between object and concept has a meaning only for consciousness, within which they are separated. Transcendental philosophy, however, sees that they are originally coincident.

The object is the result of the activity of intelligence, that, in order to reach itself and ask the question of difference in general, must create a

distance between the object and itself. Concepts arise from this operation an abstraction. These concepts, *within consciousness,* are always related and correspondent to objects: "But now the intelligence, i.e. this acting, and the object are originally one. [...] That which arises for us, when we separate the acting as such from the outcome, is called concept. [...] In the absence of consciousness, the object and its concept, and conversely, concept and object, are one and the same, and the separation of the two first occurs with the emergence of consciousness." (SW III, 505-506; S 134-135).

This is the reason why a philosophy of consciousness cannot explain the question of conformity: the foundation of the relation of conformity is the identity of intuitant and intuited that the process of abstraction has obscured. Before abstraction, the object was once one with intuition: there was a perfect identity of productive activity and product. Nevertheless, we intuit objects as a *thatness* outside ourselves. This fact is caused by the origin of consciousness, that, since its functioning requires the corresponding opposition, cannot comprehend this condition.

This point represents a return to the initial steps of Schelling's philosophical journey. We don't live anymore in the original predicament in which there was an immediate and reciprocal penetration of intuitant and intuited. We live in a predicament in which the external world doesn't appear as our own organism, that is, as what we perceive to be immediately present. The world is present as an external thatness, and our theoretical and epistemological instruments rest and work on a *besondere Handlung:* this necessity emanates from the irreparable loss of indifferent unity (SW III, 507; S 135-136).

This is the road that leads us to judgment, that separates in our consciousness what was originally united, i.e. concept and intuition. The correspondence that judgment places between subject and predicate aims at regaining what was lost. Judgment overcomes separation identifying the subject-predicate relation with the relation between intuition and concept. This identity must exist before in an intuition *(besondere Handlung)* in which the object is intuited as the rule for every construction, and this rule is in turn intuited as an object. This is the *schematism* that is "merely an intuition of the rule whereby such an object can be brought forth. [...] In the commonest exercise of the understanding, the schema figures as the general link whereby we recognize any object as of a certain sort." (SW III, 509; S 137).

However, Schelling's problem is to go beyond the *besondere Handlung* and to reach the indifference of intuition and concept. This is possible only for the superior level of transcendental intuition, where the intuited and intuition are one, and where the distinction between possibility and reality is removed by their identity. Transcendental abstraction is the foundation of

judgment: "Transcendental abstraction is the condition of judgment, but not the judgment itself. It explains merely how the intelligence arrives at separating object and concept, but not how it again unites them both in the judgment. [...] The empirical schema was explained as the sensorily intuited rule whereby an object can be brought forth empirically. The transcendental schema will thus be the sensory intuition of the rule whereby an object can be brought forth as such, or transcendentally." (SW III, 516; S 142-143). Transcendental abstraction is the condition for consciousness, that is, the inner space within which concept and object are related in a mutual contraposition.

The I that performs transcendental abstraction places itself beyond consciousness and correspondence and intuits its condition of possibility and itself as unity and difference. This transition is also a transition from theoretical to practical philosophy that, as in the Vom Ich, can venture where theoretical philosophy cannot go. Schelling says that transcendental abstraction is absolute inasmuch as it is free and detached from the object. Every link with the determined is left aside and this opens the way to the comprehension of the immediate self-determining of consciousness *(eine unmittelbare Selbst-bestimmung)* that will in turn establish its relation with the object. "This self-determining of the intelligence is called *willing* [...]. Nor indeed are we speaking of any determinate act of will, in which the concept of an object would already be present, but rather of a transcendental self-determining, or of the original act of freedom." (SW III, 533; S 156).

Schelling shifts the path of his philosophical journey *within* the opposition, aiming at its underlying identity. The focus is not concentrated upon productive intuition but upon self-intuition. Through its will the I become its own object, that is, a subject-object identity. The I becomes what produces objectiveness and realizes it in its relation with subjectiveness. The I, through a self-determining activity, becomes the object, but also the ideal I that posits the subject-object opposition: "The first act contained only the simple opposition between determinant and determinate, which corresponded to that between intuitant and intuited. In the present act we no longer have this simple opposition; instead the determinant and the determinate are *collectively* confronted by an intuitant, and both together, the intuited and intuitant of the first act are here *intuited.* [...] In that first act the I as such first *came to be,* for it is nothing else but that which becomes an object to itself; hence in the I there was as yet no ideal activity, which could simultaneously reflect upon what was emerging. In the present act the I already exists, and it is a question only of its becoming an object to itself as that which it already is. [...] in the present act the whole of the first becomes an object to the I, whereas in the first act itself only the objective element therein did so." SW III, 534-535; S 157).

Self-consciousness becomes an object within self-determination. The self-determined I is autonomous from the ideal-real element (the I in its duplicity): this independence allows the I to intuit itself as production and consciousness. This I is not absolute subjectiveness but being in absolute position and absolute division, caused by the duplicity undermining its identity from the beginning. Schelling's effort is aimed at thinking something preliminary to intelligence, that is, an ambit in which the concept remains silent and in which is possible to unveil how opposition is placed within consciousness.

The *Wollen* is the initial and absolutely free action through which the I appears to itself in its self-determination, i.e. in its unity of subject and object and as the condition of possibility of the theoretical fracture (the productive element). The I sees within itself an ineludible exigency that cannot be explained; the exigency to divide itself in production and product and to realize the object (SW III, 541-542; S 162-163). This exigency stems from an element common to all men; there *must be an identity of our limitation* (a common world shared by every intelligence which is the condition for the accord among representations).

In order to comprehend the presentation of the *work of art* within the *System* this point is extremely important. The work of art is an object, but also the result of an *ideal and real* activity that cannot be understood in terms of mere objectivity. The work of art must be a concrete manifestation for external intuition and the representation of the tension that precedes and makes the object possible in its relation with a common world and with a finality with no end. This ideal tension is a necessary and resistant element that can be found in every determined object and that it is exemplarily shown by the work of art. The work of art requires the universal consensus of the individual intelligences within the common horizon of the activity of every rational being.

The world becomes an objective thatness because the individual intelligences share a common identity. The world is not originally placed outside myself. What is originally outside myself is the product of an intuition in which idealism and realism coincide: it is the intuition with which I intuit myself, and I intuit my presence and the presence of the world. Objectiveness stems from the common original intuition of the fracture that the original intuition itself has created. The world becomes objective for the individual through this fundamental accord between the intelligences (SW, 552-557; S 171-175). The world is independent not only according to the single individual intelligence, but according to all the intelligences that intuit themselves in their relation with a *common world:* "The world, though it is posited solely through the I, is independent of me, since it resides for me in the intuition of other intelligences; their common world is the archetype

(Urbild), whose agreement with my own presentations is the sole criterion of truth." (SW III, 556; S 174). The work of art exemplarily fulfills this destiny.

The final resolution of transcendental idealism begins with the concept of the *faculty of imagination (Einbildungskraft),* that clarifies the ideas that Schelling's expounded in his *Abhandlungen.* Imagination is the mediating activity between the awareness of the infinity of freedom (i.e. the original impulse of the removal of the identity) and the finite realization of the object, (that in the *Abhandlungen* was described as a transcendental synthesis). Since the opposition between the ideal and the ideal-real is the preliminary ambit of the real opposition between the subject and the object, imagination is the faculty that produces the ideas, that (ideally) represent the possibility of the contraposition between ideal and real object. The sentiment from which, through an indissoluble contrast, the tendency to bestow reality on the ideal anticipated by imagination arises, coincides with *freedom* and represents this preliminary ambit (SW III, 558-560; S 175-177)[146].

The relation between imagination and real opposition in the ideal-real is the fulcrum of the question concerning the self-removal of identity and the advent of the opposition. This opposition, from Schelling's' transcendental philosophy point of view is the condition for every philosophy. The objective world is inasmuch the I intuits itself, and what happens in the world, takes place inasmuch the I bears and consciously intuits its modifications. Thus the I is the object of its own intuition, it modifies itself. The I through this modification posits objectiveness, which in turn becomes the external world.

The identity of the self-intuitant and the intuited self makes the original fracture and the opposition between the I and the world possible. The reality of the objective is possible only because the I is split into ideal and real I. This twofold I is co-original, and is founded on the ideal identity of the I, i.e. the absolute unconditional. If the world was completely independent of ourselves we would not be able to explain the accord between the I and the world. We would only able to postulate an unexplainable and ineffable harmony: "All free action rests, as we know, on the twofold opposition between the ideal I on the one hand, and the simultaneously ideal and real I on the other. –But what, then, is the intuitant I? –This very I, at once real and ideal, which constitutes the objective free agency. *The free-acting and the intuitant selves are thus different, once we posit that ideal activity which stands opposed to that of production; when we remove it in thought, they are the same.* Now this is undoubtedly the point to which we must first direct

[146] On imagination see Leonardo V. Distaso, *L'immaginazione nella filosofia del giovane Schelling,* in *Senso e storia dell'estetica,* (Parma: Pratiche 1995), 318-338.

our attention, and in which we must look for the ground of that identity we have postulated, between the freely active and the objectively intuitant I." (SW III, 564; S 180-181).

This is the true *stantis aut cadentis* principle of transcendental idealism. Firstly, this principle affirms the paradoxical tension between the objective activity of the I and its self-intuition of its own activity. From the point of view of the opposition, this activity is realized in the correspondence of object and subject. From the point of view of the overcoming of the opposition, the same activity achieves the intuition in which the two viewpoints are one. Secondly, this principle affirms the transition from the subjective into the objective: "If in every action a concept freely evolved by ourselves is to pass over into a nature existing independently of us, although really this nature enjoys no such independent existence, how can the transition be conceived of? Undoubtedly by this alone, that through this very act we in fact first make the world become objective to us. We act freely, and the world comes to exist independently of us –these two propositions must be synthetically united." (SW III, 566; S 182).

The world's objectiveness is the consequence of the intuition through which the I intuits itself as an object. If we transcendentally re-enact our own principle and we intuit ourselves as an object we understand the condition of possibility of knowledge and our acting according to the principle of causality and the world shall appear as objective.

Let us recapitulate Schelling's thought. Object and productive activity are one and the same. Concept precedes intuition only for the ideal I, that anticipates every division. The subsequent difference between the I and the phenomenon is derived from the fact that objectiveness relies on the ideal-real activity. At the level of the ideal-real activity there must be an identity between the I and the world. This identity is unveiled by the fact that, while I become an object to myself, the world becomes objective: "If the objective world is a mere appearance, so too is the objective element in our acting, and conversely, only if the world has reality, does the objective element in action also possess reality. It is therefore one and the same reality which we perceive in the objective world, and in our action upon the world of the senses. This conjoint status, and indeed mutual conditioning of objective action and the world's reality, outside and through each other, is a consequence wholly peculiar to transcendental idealism, and unattainable through any other system." (SW III, 570; S 185).

The I is an agent in the external world only because there is an original identity of being and phenomenon that rests on self-consciousness. Thus self-consciousness sets the stage where both the subject of consciousness and the subject of activity play their roles. General self-determination, in which the I and the objective world are one, is the director of the

representation. This activity is common to every I in its universality, on the shared ground of the paradoxical tension between subject and object.

2. *The Repetition of Absolute Identity in History*

According to Schelling, history is the process of the progressive accord of freedom and necessity, and it answers the question concerning man's individual and collective relation with the world, that is shared by all men on the common ground of the idealistic transcendental principle. According to the young philosopher, the fundamental relation is: *freedom:necessity=conscious:unconscious.*

However, their activity finds the possibility of an accord: freedom must be necessity, and necessity freedom; but necessity is the unconscious. Man, in its relation and opposition with the world, acts freely and consciously, but cannot always realize the premise of free will and action. The world resists man's action, but this doesn't mean that the world has a true independence from man, or an unconscious activity "whereby out of the most uninhibited expression of freedom there arises unawares something wholly involuntary, and perhaps even contrary to the agent's will, which he himself could never have realized through his willing." (SW III, 594; S 204). If man was absolutely free, everything would be possible for him, and we would be compelled to hypothesize a humanity aiming at a common goal under the rule of a sole intelligence. Such intervention of a hidden necessity into human freedom determines tragic art, founds the existence and the action of every man, and allows transcendental philosophy to affirm the presupposition that makes man an ens: "though man is admittedly free in regard to the action itself, he is nonetheless dependent, in regard to the finite result of his actions, upon a necessity that stands over him, and itself takes a hand in the play of his freedom." (SW III, 595; S 205).

How is it the unconscious birth, within our free acting, of something that was not in our premises (and that freedom alone could not realize) possible? This problem is the reformulation of the question that we have already encountered: how does an objective world arise from me through intuition? Schelling says that my individual action can be realized only through the common will of the entire species *(die ganze Gattung).* Every individual free action must be in a state of harmony and unity within history, which is the intuition of the entire human species. This accord between the freedom of the individual and the destiny of events *(Schicksal)* must take place in an absolute synthesis of freedom and necessity. The individual freedom of every man rests on the necessity of the objectification of action, that shows the common element of all the individual freedoms, that is, the *lawfulness* of history.

This new opposition comprehends intelligence in itself (the absolutely objective common element) and free and determining action (the absolutely subjective element). The accord between these two terms is possible only if we reach the identity of the (conscious) subjective absolute and the (unconscious) objective absolute. This *absolute identity* with no duplicity cannot be reached either through consciousness or through a speculative or theoretical reflection. This identity is an ineffable and obscure *eternal unconscious*; it never becomes objective *(un-be-dingt)* and it is "the eternal mediator between the self-determining subjective within us, and the objective or intuitant; at once the ground of lawfulness in freedom, and of freedom in the lawfulness of the object." (SW III, 600; S 209).

This absolute identity is also *absolute simplicity:* it makes finiteness possible, and it is the fundament of the harmony between the objective and the subjective of the free action of the individual and of the entire human species. The movement of this absolute re-enacts the original movement of the I towards the opposition, and its action is both free and necessary. This absolute is at work in every intelligence that infinitely strives towards the absolute itself. Intelligence endeavors to reach the absolute, and this means that intelligence is placed outside the indistinct and indifferent unity: "if now the intelligence steps out from the absolute point of view, that is, out of the universal identity in which nothing can be distinguished, and becomes conscious of (distinguishes) itself, which comes about in that its act becomes objective to it, or passes over into the objective world, the free and the necessary are then separated therein." (SW III, 602; S 210). Man enters into the realm of history, which is the place where division is actual. Man belongs to a species that realizes what its own determined freedom is unable to realize: the return to the absolute identity that dwells in the obscurity of every man.

The quest for the principle of the accord between the objective and the subjective coincides with the problem of comprehending the essential and paradoxical relation between the opposition and the identity of its terms. Man is the protagonist of the struggle between origin and opposition, spontaneity and necessity, possibility and reality, because he rests on the common ground of all this terms. Since man's position is within the situation of actual separation (history is the final outcome of the *Schicksal* of finiteness), the only thing to do is to comprehend, from the point of view of transcendental philosophy, how it is possible to make the absolute visible and how we can be philosophically aware of the separation while we endeavor towards the invisible absolute.

According to transcendental philosophy, separation is here to stay, and it is an unavoidable fact. Thus the principle of the harmonic accord between the subjective and the objective must be objectified *for the I*; it must find a

presence that repeats the absolute identity, that precedes every separation. This principle cannot remain shrouded in a intangible obscurity: *it must be objectified in its relation with the I,* that is, in its relation with the content of the original position (described as A=A) and with man's existence.

The philosophy of art is the organ that allows transcendental philosophy to point out and comprehend the terms of this objectification.

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Chapter 9

EPILOGUE ON EARTH

ART AS THE ORGAN OF PHILOSOPHY; AESTHETICS AS THE PHILOSOPHIE ÜBERHAUPT

Intuition has two crucial tasks. Intuition must comprehend the separation that takes place in the phenomenon; it must also comprehend that in the I there must be a unity (the identity of conscious and unconscious); it must bring to consciousness this identity. The corresponding element of this intuition is a *product* suspended between nature (object) and freedom (subject): "With the product of freedom, our product will have this in common, that it is consciously brought about; and with the product of nature, that it is unconsciously brought about." (SW III, 612; S 219).

In order to understand how philosophy can comprehend identity objectively we must consider an exemplary object that is determined by identity. This product is the work of art, which is a peculiar product of the activity of the I. The work of art emerges from the invisible identity with a movement that begins consciously and subjectively, and ends unconsciously and objectively. The I is conscious of the production but unconscious of the product; this product is not the immediate result of the free and intentional activity alone, but of its interplay with an unconscious activity, independent from freedom and contradictorily present in the I.

The aesthetic activity stems from a paradox that enables the comprehension of the original identity of the I in its opposition[147]. The contradiction between the consciousness of the production and the

[147] See L. Pareyson, *L'estetica di Schelling,* in *L'estetica dell'Idealismo tedesco* (Milano: Mursia, 2003), 271: "Thus the philosophy of art is the only one that can solve the problem left unsolved by theoretical and practical philosophy, that is, the problem of how is the conformity of the representations with the objects (and vice versa) possible, a problem whose solution is the highest task of philosophy".

unconsciousness of the product can be understood only if their paradoxical interplay is reconstructed following a specific direction, that is, aiming at the *manifestation of the product.* The product in itself is nothing but an appearance of identity. The identity of the activities appears in the production, that stems form a free process, and that nonetheless leads to necessary product, which is the unconscious point of arrival of a subjective process. "A complete manifestation *(Darstellung)* of this identity" is possible only in the reunion of the two activities, and this reunion takes place in the precise point in which it is recognized by the self-intuiting knowledge (SW III, 614; S 220).

The *kenosis* of freedom that originated the production takes place in its final product. The appearance of the product (in its unification for the I) provokes the disappearance of freedom, as if there were a limitation of the free action of the subject. The subject contemplates its own product with a feeling of *happiness(Beglückung)* and *amazement(Überraschung),* which is the result of the realization of something that would be otherwise impossible: *the vision of the invisible through what became visible.* The obscure and unknown principle of the union of two opposite principles (conscious and unconscious, that is, free subjectivity and necessary objectivity) *is reflected by the product,* as the necessary and exceeding aspect of freedom. This event takes place always and only in the unity of genius: "This unchanging identity *(unveränderlich Identische),* which can never attain to consciousness, and merely radiates back from the product, is for the producer precisely what destiny is for the agent, namely a dark unknown force which supplies the element of completeness or objectivity to the piecework of freedom; and as that power is called destiny, which through our free action realizes, without our knowledge and even against our will, goals *that we did not envisage,* so likewise that incomprehensible *(Unbegreifliche)* agency which supplies objectivity to the conscious, without the cooperation of freedom, and to some extent in opposition to freedom (wherein is eternally dispersed what in this production is united) is denomineted by means of the obscure concept of *genius.*" (SW III, 615-616; S 222).

With these considerations we finally touch the heart of the matter from which we started, and that have accompanied us throughout our journey. The representation of the inconceivable and invariably identical element of the human spirit shows the contradictory foundation on which our existence stands, and paves the way for the work of art, which is "The ultimate in him [the genius]" and "the root of his whole being *(Daseyn)*".

The genius acts and produces his work driven by a tension that he cannot control. The work of genius, the work of art springs from the essential and fundamental paradox on which existence, in its original duplicity, is

grounded. The work of art manifests the absolute identity through its objectivity: genius stems from the union and the interplay of two counterposited activities, which correspond to two terms of the original opposition. Identity was originally split into two terms. One of the two terms, the I, becomes the accomplished articulation of finiteness which was originally indistinct from absolute identity. This is the reason why we need to objectify that identity.

Man exists on the fundament of opposition (which from the transcendental point of view is original), and therefore philosophy finds its organ in art, that is, *poetry (Poesie).* Poetry opens the scenario of the manifestation of the fundamental opposition upon which our existence stands. The poetic reconciliation makes possible, for the tragic hero (who represents man), to redeem his position through a vision that transcends the distinction between freedom and necessity. Poetry identifies the tragic hero as he who abandons the common resignation to existence and who boldly challenges fate (SW III, 618-619; S 223-224).

The work of art reflects *(reflektirt)* what the intellect cannot comprehend nor define with a concept. The work of art brings forth to light what would otherwise remain hidden. The reflective character of the work of art is the result of its own determination, which is a synthesis of nature and freedom *(bewußtlose Unenlichkeit).* The artistic product synthetically reunites what the work of art reflects, that is, the separation of conscious and unconscious activity. Thus infinity is expressed within the finite. The separation is shown for what it is: inescapable because it is simultaneously the unity and the difference of two terms. The finite cannot face directly infinity: *infinity would otherwise lose its infiniteness* (SW III, 620; S 225-226).

The work of art reunites what is separated and indistinct in nature. Aesthetics is the organ through which Schelling's transcendental philosophy can comprehend (with a pre-theoretical intuition) that ineffable and indistinct element that no theoretical speculation can reach or describe. Aesthetics, placed between the unconditional and the conditional, can represent our original state of existence. Art realizes what theoretical and practical philosophy cannot achieve, and the relationship between the *Philosophie der Kunst* and the *Philosophie überhaupt* represents an important turning point of Schelling's philosophical project.

The task of philosophy is to recall to consciousness what cannot be an object, and that is the fundament of objectiveness and knowledge. *It is impossible to describe the absolutely identical, and the purely and radically non-objective (das absolut Identische schlechtin nichtobjektiv) with a concept.* This ultimate element can be intuited only through the immediate intuition of the nonobjective *(unmittelbare Anschauung),* which is the organ of an immediate, pre-reflective and pre-categorical knowledge.

Art objectifies the nonobjective, not through a theoretical and conceptual representation but through an *intellectual intuition* that makes the unconceivable visible. The object of art is the *schlechtin Identische* which is neither subjective nor objective, but the unity and the indifference of the two terms.

Intellectual intuition is not a sensible intuition. Intellectual intuition does not find the object in front of itself, but it contains the object within itself. Thus intellectual intuition is the immediate medium between the absolutely identical and objectiveness. This is the point from which art realizes itself through *aesthetic intuition:* "This universally acknowledged and altogether incontestable objectivity of intellectual intuition is art itself. For the aesthetic intuition simply is the intellectual intuition becoming objective". In the note related to this passage, Schelling explains the meaning of aesthetic intuition: "The whole of philosophy starts, and must start, from a principle which, as the absolute principle is also at the same time the absolutely identical. An absolutely simple and identical cannot be grasped or communicated through description, nor through concepts at all. It can only be intuited. Such an intuition is the organ of all philosophy. –But this intuition, which is an intellectual rather than a sensory one, and has as its object neither the objective nor the subjective, but the absolutely identical, in itself neither subjective nor objective, is itself merely an internal one, which cannot in turn become objective for itself: it can become objective only through a second intuition. This second intuition is the aesthetic." (SW III, 624-625; S 229).

Art can accomplish the task that philosophy cannot pursue. Thus philosophy must become a transcendental philosophy; it must seek its own principle through the separation in which man lives and what man has lost through his consciousness. The principle of philosophy, that must be sought through the assumption of the original separation and the infinite contrast, is the same principle of aesthetic production: "It is not, however, the first principle of philosophy, merely, and the first intuition that philosophy proceeds from, which initially becomes objective through aesthetic production; the same is true of the entire mechanism which philosophy deduces, and on which in turn it rests. Philosophy sets out from an infinite dichotomy of opposed activities; but the same dichotomy is also the basis of every aesthetic production, and by each individual manifestation of art it is wholly restored." (SW III, 625-626; S 230).

The faculty *of productive imagination* is the faculty capable of bestowing and imparting form and image. The identical is objectified and shown in the work of art through the *faculty of composition* (or *poetic faculty: Dichtungsvermögen*) that removes the infinite opposition. The removal of the opposition is the annihilation of the effect of the position. It is the first

movement of identity aiming at its own division. This annihilation restores the identity in its productive character and its opening towards determination and visibility[148].

What was originally identical, and that was lost in the I through consciousness, *can be identical again in the expression of the work of art,* in which the opposition is infinite. The absolute work of art is one, and expressed in many exemplarities. The work of art is the expression of what is realized beyond consciousness about every individual object, that immediately represents infinity (SW III, 627; S 231).

Art is the organ and the document (expression and exhibition) of philosophy, and objectively represents what would be otherwise impossible to understand or comprehend, i.e. the production of the unconscious in its original identity with the conscious, and the identity/difference of unconditional and conditional which is the basis of man's finite existence. Art can express what in nature remains absolutely silent, and that is reflected in the spirit: the identity of internal and external, ideal and real, existence and non-existence. Man mirrors himself in the work of art, and he sees that the original principle of his existence is a forgotten identity that vanished when he became a conscious subject separated form the unconscious object.

Through this comprehension, and the questioning of separation, man must return to the original identity that can be represented by the non-conceptual objectification of the work of art. This return implies the re-conjunction of being and thought, which were constantly separated and counterposited in the relation between subject and object. What Schelling calls a return to poetry is a return to the sphere of the immediacy of identity. Thus art has a universal significance and meaning, because only art can communicate what would otherwise remain concealed or shrouded in an exoteric knowledge. Philosophy is art with no objectivity, and objective philosophy is art: "the whole sequence of the transcendental philosophy is based merely upon a continual raising of self-intuition to increasingly higher powers, from the first and simplest exercise of self-consciousness, to the highest, namely, the aesthetic." (SW III, 631; S 233).

Schelling's synthesis identifies the paradox of the opposition with the history of self-consciousness. The moment in which the I intuits itself through sensation and becomes an object for the I itself, follows the moment in which the identical ceases to be for itself, separates itself into subjectivity and objectivity and generates the I (self-consciousness in general). Subsequently *the I becomes an object trough sensation.* It is simultaneously

[148] Here we can notice that Schelling returns to some of the themes that were outlined by Hölderlin that had a close affinity with the speculation of the young philosopher.

subject and object of sensation. This duplicity allows the I to find a world outside itself, which is opposed to its consciousness. This is the true beginning of the conflict between the I and the world, and this contrast can be resolved only if the I intuits itself as productive, that is, as something that recognizes that every preceding operation derives from its being active and passive conscious and unconscious freedom and necessity. The I is objective because is recognized as such by intelligence; this "otherness" creates universality and the possibility of absolute will: man perceives himself to be above nature.

Art, through aesthetic intuition, expresses the incomprehensible identical that encompasses the dramatic conflict of existence, and dwells within imagination just as the opposition dwells within identity. The artist is the medium of this realization: he puts together and composes the terms of the contrast in the composition of the work of art. Aesthetics, as a critical philosophy, describes this contrast and its solution, and therefore it is not a mere philosophy of art, nor a theory of the beautiful. Aesthetics is a philosophy that questions the condition of being within experience from within experience itself. This condition is based on an unconditional condition and on a conditional condition. Schelling analyzes this relation throughout his youth, and this relation becomes the object of an aesthetics that specifically understands this condition from within the conditional. The *System* results in the illustrative task of aesthetics, which in turn is the outcome of man's effort of comprehension within the opposition that founds finiteness. This is the attempt to seize the meaning of one's own existence from within the original situation of the unity of identity and separation.

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